

Society of Mary

Marist Vocation News

February 2022



Introduction

by Fr. Ted Keating, SM, Director for Vocation and Formation U.S Province,
Marist College Washington, DC

We hope you are appreciating the Vocation newsletter series for our Marist Vocation Year. As we continue to reflect on the question “Why is a Marist vocation critical for our world today?” we invite you to read the following reflections from Nik Rodewald, Campus Minister, Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia; Ron Nikodem, SM, Chaplain, Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy, Pontiac, Michigan; David Musso, SM, Chaplain, Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia; and Linda Sevcik, SM, a Marist Sister and Executive Director, Manresa Jesuit Retreat House, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

In placing these reflections in the context of our efforts at vocational outreach as Marists, we are finding that our year of reflection touches not only our efforts to call forth vocations for Marist Life, but it also clarifies our mission as a Society to call forth the vocation and God’s call to everyone that we engage in our ministries. It is at the heart of our outreach to others as Marists. When we say that we are called as Marists to “think as Mary, judge as Mary, feel and act as Mary in all things”, it is not only our spirituality but our mission. Mary thinks, judges, feels, and acts as one who was overshadowed by the Spirit in the Annunciation. Therefore, as Nik Rodewald does his work at Marist School in calling forth the individual vocation of each student, he is preparing them for the call of the Spirit in their lives to follow Jesus in discipleship. Mary is the very model of that discipleship as the Gospel of Luke shows us and from the very first moment of her call in the Annunciation. So, in our Marist way of seeing things, we grow into a continuing conversion of mind (“thinking”), of decision-making (“judging”), of heart (“feeling”) and of behavior (“acting”) as is any follower of Christ, but made real for us by this woman of the Spirit whom we follow.

As Fr. Rowland (president of Marist School) puts it, this creates a culture surrounding us as Marists of vocation in this broader sense that more likely finds among us some who will want to live out their call as a Marist priest, brother, sister, missionary sister or as a member of Marist Laity. As Nik Rodewald comments, this is a culture in which vocations to Marist life may flourish.

It is our hope that our series on the critical need for a Marist vocation for the Marist Vocation Year will inspire us all to rediscover the mystery of our own vocational call and support young people in the discernment of their vocation.



Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A Campus Minister's Perspective*

by Nik Rodewald, Campus Minister, Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia

What does a Marist vocation have to offer young people today? In a world of increased secularization, decreasing religious practice, political polarization and other problems, this question might seem rather complex. However, if we take a moment to understand the reality facing our children, the answer might be surprisingly simple.



Let us begin with awareness of the reality that teenagers today face:

- **Mental Health Crisis:** Even before the onset of Covid-19, a mental health crisis among youth had been brewing. In 2003, 5.8% of children aged 6-17 years had been diagnosed with clinical anxiety or depression at some point in their lives; by 2012, that number had increased to 8.4%. Since the pandemic, parents have observed new or worsening problems with anxiety in 36% of teen girls and 19% of teen boys. None of these numbers include issues with ADHD, depression, difficulties sleeping, withdrawal, aggression or trauma.
- **Lack of Hope in Society:** A high school student recently commented to me that they “don’t really know anything about Congress.” Despite some media narratives that suggest young people are deeply involved in politics and social change, in 2018 only about 20-25% of teenagers believed that the “political system helps people with genuine needs.” Those responses were similar across differences in gender, race, and political affiliation.
- **Lack of Social Engagement:** According to Pew Research, teens today spend more time sleeping and doing homework than they did in previous decades, and less time working for pay and socializing. This is consonant with anecdotal experience where, when asked what they are most looking forward to over the weekend, my students tend to respond with: “sleep.” The rise of social media fundamentally changes social dynamics, resulting in fewer face-to-face encounters with others, a phenomenon exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **High-Pressure/Overextension:** Especially in the world of independent schools that create a culture of success in which students often feel their worth determined by Advanced Placement exams, Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT), American College Tests (ACT), sports championships and artistic honors, it should not be surprising that many high-achieving youth find themselves overextended and in high-pressure situations on a near constant basis.



How does the Marist charism respond to these concerns? From my perspective, this reality demonstrates the need for a Church with a Marian face: one that is merciful, listening, understanding, joyful and kind. Over the last two years as I have worked to bring various vocations speakers into Marist School and solicited feedback from our students, it is easy to tell what resonates with them and what does not: our students are consistently touched when they see people of faith who are joyful, at peace and kind. They may or may not resonate with the witness borne of apostolic works, high levels of intellect and they may find a vocation to prayer a mystery, but our youth do inherently understand the power of kindness, joy and peace. As we model this, we build up the Marian Church and encourage the young in our midst to discover a vocation to do the same.

Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A School Chaplain's Perspective*

by Ron Nikodem, SM, Chaplain, Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy, Pontiac, Michigan

Catholic Schools Week was celebrated from January 30th through February 5th. At Notre Dame Preparatory School (NDPMA) in Pontiac, Michigan we celebrated the week with two Masses, one for the elementary and middle school students and staff and another for the high school students and staff. The theme of Catholic Schools Week this year was "Faith, Excellence and Service." I would like to expand on these three components.

FAITH is at the center of our Catholic School. The students are given the opportunity to practice their faith and receive the sacraments. They are encouraged to ask questions as they learn about God and are able to integrate their faith with culture and life. Students learn to be "Christian people, upright citizens and academic scholars."

EXCELLENCE is a virtue in our Catholic School. There is a warm, welcoming environment. There are high standards and the teachers help the students succeed. The teachers are very dedicated, caring and effective. The students are impacted in a very positive way and are comforted and supported by their teachers. The students seem to thrive in these surroundings.

SERVICE is a main component in our Catholic School. The students learn to respect others, especially those who are poor and marginalized. Projects and service opportunities are offered by Campus Ministry. The students experience putting their "faith into action" and in this way are serving God and other people. They are given the chance to live out their faith and make it more meaningful.

Since NDPMA is a Marist school, Faith, Excellence and Service are all done with an "ardent love of neighbor", which is the school's theme for this academic year. We try to be humble, simple, compassionate and merciful, like Mary, and encourage the students to exemplify these qualities in the classroom, at home, on the athletic fields and with friends. The Marist community at NDPMA brings Mary's presence to the school's campus.

So, why is Marist vocation critical for our world today? Marist vocation is important today to foster the faith of our students, to maintain the high excellence and to continue the service to our sisters and brothers. And all of this is accomplished in the spirit of Mary.



Ron Nikodem, SM



Catholic Schools Week Mass

Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A School Chaplain's Perspective*

by David Musso, SM, Chaplain, Marist School, Atlanta, Georgia

"The harvest is rich, but the laborers are few. So ask the master to send out laborers for his harvest." (Mt. 9:37, 38). This passage is part of a prayer I first learned from the Marist Fathers when I was in high school, and it has lived in my memory since then. There were layers of meaning, and an urgency to the message that Jesus delivered when he first spoke those words. That urgency endures today, and the message itself continues to invite, and challenge every person whose greatest desire is to respond to God's Call to follow his Son. It is in the listening, hearing, understanding, and responding to that Call, that God's presence is made known and active in our lives, and in our world.



David Musso, SM

In this, Fr. Jean-Claude Colin, Founder of the Society of Mary, had a vision and understanding of the needs and purpose of a Marist education, for good and faithful lay leaders, as well as those preparing for a life as a Marist religious brother, sister or priest. Central to those preparations was prayer and a growing relationship with God. And the Work of Mary, under whose name, and example, the Marists were formed, would be accomplished first within the spiritual life in community and then in ministry, according to individual gifts and the needs of Province.

As Chaplain at both Marist School, and of Notre Dame Academy, in Duluth, Georgia, community life has been a foundation of my life and ministry, which has allowed me to share the journeys of many students during their formative years at these two schools. I have watched in joy and wonder as they have discovered the unique gifts with which they will forge their own places in an ever-changing world. I have never forgotten Fr. Colin's wisdom of insisting that the spiritual life of each of our students is our priority, as is our foundational mission in forming each student as a whole person in the image of Christ. In full partnership with a dedicated and active Campus Ministry, and with a faithful, caring and wonderfully competent administration, faculty and staff, at both schools, together, we have been able to assist our students, in the progress of their prayer and to provide them with opportunities through liturgies, spiritual devotions and retreats, to reflect on the plan that God offers each of them, and the ultimate success that they will achieve by simply choosing the path that only God can provide.

Every day at our Masses, in our classrooms and communities, we pray for clarity of the vocation God offers each young person. We are also most conscious of the need for vocations to vowed religious life and the priesthood, to more actively proclaim the Glory of God, and the consistent and healing teachings of the Church in today's ever-changing world. With an invitation to those open to a religious or priestly vocation, each member of our community, and many in our faculties and administrations have taken a pro-active role in a vigilant watch for potential vocation prospects. We welcome encourage and guide all of our students in their own discernment of God's personal plan and path for them. As Marists seek to do Mary's work "behind the scenes", there can be no greater effort in inviting others to Marist life than by our witness, example and joy. We do the Work of Mary with the gifts that God provides, and we depend ultimately and always on the guidance, intercessions and direction of Mary, our mother, and preeminent and perpetual Superior.



Why is Marist Vocation Critical for Our World Today? - *A Retreat Director's Perspective*

by Linda Sevcik, SM, Executive Director, Manresa Jesuit Retreat House, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Focusing on Marist spirituality from a retreat director's perspective, it strikes me how well the Marist charism transfers to the needs of this ministry.

As I converse with other retreat directors from the mid-west, we are noting a trend, at least in several mid-west retreat houses, of an increase in the number of lay persons seeking individually directed retreats. There is a range of ages among these retreatants, men and women. Interestingly, there is a growing percentage of young adults in their twenties and thirties among those seeking an individually directed retreat. Some attend Sunday worship regularly; others do not. Most are Catholic, but not all. All seek a deeper relationship with God.



Linda Sevcik, SM

As retreat directors, what treasures from Marist spirituality are particularly valuable in this expanding ministry?

Hallmarks of our Marist Founders are a kind and relational approach with people to whom one is ministering and conveying deep respect for each individual. Certainly those attitudes are needed in directing retreats, and they tend to create a warm and trusting space where God's leading is more readily discerned. This relational approach also models in some way the kind of relationship the retreatant desires to deepen with the Persons of the Trinity and perhaps Mary or the saints, so is helpful on many levels.

We Marists consider an approach to ministry characterized by mercy and compassion to be key to our spirituality, identifying with Mary, Mother of Mercy. This means we convey acceptance and care for each person as they are, and not judgment, even though out of care for the person the director will likely offer challenges to certain behaviors or attitudes as the relationship deepens. During the retreat, over several days, retreatants often repent of certain actions, habitual behaviors or attitudes, and the director reminds them of God's loving mercy.

Finally, Marist Founder Jean Claude Colin offers this reflection:

"We are living in an age when everything should be done in a modest fashion...It is only by being unassuming that we can achieve success nowadays. We must win souls by submitting ourselves to them."
(A Founder Speaks, 102:33)

A key phrase in the spirituality of Marists is "hidden and unknown," very related to the word used by Colin, "unassuming." It describes the way all Marists should present themselves in ministry, with humility, not drawing attention to themselves and their gifts. Applying this to the ministry of retreat direction, it indicates the humble manner with which we should approach each person, seeking the ways God has already been working in the person throughout his/her life, and building upon that. It means listening and praying, not seeking to sound clever or to jump to conclusions immediately about what kind of guidance the person needs.

In my ministry as a retreat director, the gift of our Marist Charism is a priceless and essential guide.



Additional Vocation Reflections

Marist School President Fr. Bill Rowland, SM Reflects on Marist Year for Vocations

The Society of Mary has designated the year 2022 as the Marist Year for Vocations. This opens the door for us as a community to reflect on how we have experienced and answered God's call in our own lives. Each article by Fr. Rowland attempts to look at the whole topic of vocations, starting with the universal call to holiness that comes with Baptism. Included below are the links to Fr. Rowland's reflections.

- [2022 Marist Year for Vocations](#)
- [Marist School is a Vocational School and a College Preparatory School](#)



Fr. Bill Rowland, SM

As part of Marist School's efforts to nurture a culture of vocations, Sister Jean Rhoads, D.C. visited Marist School on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus. She offered a reflection on her vocation to religious life during the all-school Mass and also talked with classes about the [Daughters of Charity](#) and their medical mission to the poor. We invited Sr. Rhoads to share the reflection from her presentation at Marist School.

The Presentation of Jesus by Sr. Jean Rhoads, D.C.



Today's feast of the Presentation of Jesus is a beautiful day to highlight the life of Simeon and Anna and to compare them to vocation, specifically, the call to consecrated life. On the day that Mary and Joseph went to the Temple to present Jesus with an offering of 2 turtle doves, Simeon and Anna were the only two people who saw Him as the Savior of the world. Why were they the only 2 who recognized this? It was because Simeon and Anna were faith-filled people who prayed often, loved God and hoped for Him to come and save His people. That is, they were well-trained, ready and waiting and so could see that the Messiah was in that Temple!

There are several vocations in life and each is valuable in God's eyes ~ married life, single life, consecrated life, and priesthood. It usually takes a person several years to discern and figure out to which path of life God is calling. (He doesn't send text messages or post on Instagram or TikTok!) To hear this call, one must be well-trained (i.e., pray often, go to Mass more frequently, etc.), ready (i.e., have an open heart) and waiting (respond with faith). Beginning in 4th grade, I sensed in my heart that Jesus was asking me to help other people. I felt this call more deeply in high school and college...that Jesus wanted me to give my entire life to Him. I responded to this call by becoming a [Daughter of Charity](#) (DC), one who has dedicated my life to the Lord through 4 vows: *poverty, chastity, obedience and service of the poor*. These vows mean I choose to live

- **Simply**...with fewer material things
- **Chastely**...not marry or have children of my own
- **Obediently**...listen to God especially through the leaders of my Community
- **Serving the poor**...our Community intentionally sends us DCs to serve poor people who are in need of education, health care, food, housing, etc.



Sr. Jean Rhoads, D.C.

We Daughters of Charity serve Jesus in the poor. Like Simeon and Anna, every day we try to recognize Jesus in the poor in our various ministries and to reflect Jesus to each person. We train well through daily Mass, praying rosary, Morning and Evening Prayer, and silent prayer to listen to God and that pattern helps us to be ready and waiting each day to recognize Jesus.

How about your calling? No one can tell you...you have to **train well** by praying often and asking guidance from your parents, parish priests, campus ministers, and be **ready & waiting** to listen to God in the thoughts and feelings in your mind and heart. God bless you!



Vocation Resources

Accompanying College Students

by Sister Nicole Trahan F.M.I.

Sister Nicole Trahan, F.M.I. is a member of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Marianists) and currently lives in Dayton, Ohio. Trahan serves her congregation as a member of the provincial leadership team, vocations director, and director of the pre-novitiate program. She is also a part-time campus minister at Chaminade Julianne Catholic High School and on the board of the National Religious Vocation Conference.



RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY
LEARN IT! LOVE IT! LIVE IT!



Religious Life Today: Wellsprings of support for vocations

A Catholic college campus minister and diocesan young adult minister outline ways their work supports those discerning God's call and helps promote religious vocations.

An ideal [webinar](#) not only for those discerning religious life, but for those in Catholic campus ministry, youth and young adult ministry, vocation offices, and on parish vocation team. Gain new insights and strategies and confirm the good work you are already doing!

WHEN: Thursday, March 3, 2022 at 8 p.m. ET/ 7 p.m. CT/ 6 p.m. MT/ 5 p.m. PT

Society of Mary (Marists) Vocation News

News from Marist Seminary New Zealand

The Marist Seminary in Auckland, New Zealand recently welcomed a new seminarian to the community, Vincent Brzozowski. He introduces himself below:

“Hi, I’m Vincent and I’ve just moved up from Wellington into the Marist Seminary. I was born half Polish in South Auckland, and was taught music from a young age. I continued through Holy Cross Papatoetoe and Sancta Maria College to studying trumpet and piano at Victoria University of Wellington. After completing my degree I spent 2021 teaching music lessons on piano and trumpet, also trying fishing the odd time. I discovered the Society of Mary through my Wellington parish, St. Mary of the Angels, and decided to enter the process of discernment after visiting the Seminary in Hopetoun St. at a Come and See weekend. I am looking forward to the year ahead and hope to meet some people!”



Vincent is pictured with his parents Stefan and Julie and sister Amelia, alongside second year seminarian Lachie Bartlett



Seminarian Hemi Ropata, SM writes a reflection on communion, relationships and our deepest need for Trinitarian love for the blog: [Evangelion - sharing the truth in love](#).

Click [HERE](#) to read his reflection, “Tik Tok and Broken Communion.”

Marist Vocation Year Prayer (2021-2022)

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we ask you to look on this family of Mary, your Mother, with eyes of mercy. Throughout this year of vocations, we ask you, Lord, to enrich the Marist world with the fire of your Holy Spirit.

May Mary’s subtle and delicate presence enable us to breathe her spirit.
So that, committed to our own vocation,
we will be credible witnesses of your Gospel.

And, renewed and strengthened with the fire of your Spirit, we may help bring to life the seed of a vocation which you have implanted in the hearts of the young.

Enable us to accompany them in the fulfillment of their personal vocation.
Lord Jesus, give us vocations according
to your heart. Amen.

Jean Claude Colin
– Pray for us.

