2022 Marist Year for Vocations

Part #1 – Fr. Bill Rowland, S.M.

The Society of Mary has designated 2022 as the Marist Year for Vocations. It began on November 15, the anniversary of the death of Society of Mary founder Jean-Claude Colin and will conclude on the same date next year. During the year, Marist religious are to ***enrich*** their vocation, ***encourage*** one another to live their Marist vocation with greater fidelity, and ***assist*** others in discerning their vocations, including living as a Marist religious or as a member of the Marist Laity.

Mr. Nik Rodewald has been asked to oversee the school's efforts to create a vocation culture at Marist School. Students will learn the skills necessary to recognize (discern) how the Risen Christ is calling them to live out the call to holiness they received at Baptism. Most students will be called to serve the Church as a member of the laity through marriage (Sacrament of Matrimony) or the single life. Others will be called to serve the Church through the Sacrament of Holy Orders or one of the many forms of religious life. Students will be encouraged to use these skills right away. After all, ordinary events of daily life contain many calls to action through which the Risen Christ is beckoning all of us to respond.

Last year, Mr. Rodewald met with grades 7-9 to introduce them to how to recognize when the Risen Christ is **calling** them, how to **listen** and **respond**. He met with faculty from other disciplines to introduce them to this vision of creating a culture of vocations. They were encouraged to think outside the box and discuss how their course (science, math, history, etc.) could lend itself to looking at a specific lesson but from a vocational perspective.

This year, Mr. Rodewald will initiate similar conversations with students and faculty in grades 10-12. Parents especially need to be involved. They are the primary teachers of the faith to their children and the religious leaders of the family, which is the Church in miniature. In addition to the many hats they wear, one of those will be a vocation director. What that means and will look like in practice will need further exploration.

Mr. Rodewald identified the following factors contributing to a decrease in the number of women and men entering religious life and priesthood. "This decline in ecclesial vocations corresponds to a decline in a culture that supports such vocations. Secularization, scandal within the institutional Church, and a shift in socioeconomic demographics within the Catholic Church are some of the factors that contribute to a general culture that does not support or encourage ecclesial vocations. Many of these same factors discourage not only ecclesial vocations but also a deep discernment about how one might live their life in light of the Gospel."

The first step in halting or reversing that trend is to clarify that Marist School is a vocational school and a college preparatory school. The second step is to encourage deep discernment about how students might live their lives in light of the Gospel and help with some practical guidance as to what that will look like that is age-appropriate for our students.

In my next article, I will explain why Marist School is a vocational school and a college preparatory school.