The Vocation to the Marist Laity

Part #4 – Fr. Bill Rowland, S.M.

I want to introduce the 2022 Marist Year for Vocations with an invitation to consider serving the Church and Marist School as a member of the Marist laity. Before I get there, I want to consider the different ways you can participate in the mission of the Society of Mary through your involvement at Marist School.

What is the mission of the Society of Mary? It is to be the presence of Mary to the Church in this increasingly secular society whose spirit is hostile to the Church and an antithesis to the spirit of Mary. For a complete treatment of this, go to ***How to be a Marist in a Secular World***; ***Becoming Aware of Living in a Secular World***; ***Jesus So Loves This Secular Age, That He Sent His Mother***; and ***Marist School's Mission to an Increasingly Secular Society***.

If, after reading these and other articles and from your own experience being at a Marist School, you may feel at home with the mission and spirituality of the Society of Mary. Let's explore the different ways you can ensure that Marist School will remain unwaveringly Marist (Strategic Plan 2025, Strategic Priority #1) by appropriating the Marist mission and spirituality as your own and in a way that "suits you."

You already may have heard reference to the Marist Way. This does not refer to the Marist School way of doing things. Instead, the Marist Way refers to a certain way of living the Gospel. That is the way Mary lived it as understood by a group of religious and laity called Marists. This Marist Way of living the Gospel describes how Marists strive to breathe in her spirit so that in all things they may think, judge, feel, and act like Mary, the first disciple of Jesus and model of discipleship. To live the Marist Way is to be engaged in "The Work of Mary." Marists are called to this important work by a gracious choice of hers.

To maintain and deepen the Marist ethos of the school and advance its mission, the Marist Way forms and develops its participants in the spirit of the Society of Mary by embracing a life of prayer, community, learning, service, and vocation. Programs are offered with this intent in mind. Some may wish to partner with the Society of Mary in advancing the mission of Marist School. Others may feel called by a gracious choice of Mary to identify themselves as Marist laity.

Partners in advancing the Marist Way of living the Gospel want to support the overall aims of the Society of Mary, especially as they pertain to the education of youth, but without having "to sign on the dotted line." They do their part by knowing about the pivotal Marists, the basics of Marist history, the key Marist places, and the Marist themes and values promoted during the school year. They may or may not participate in programs that provide opportunities to be formed in the Marist Way of living the Gospel through interaction with other like-minded adults.

Some self-identify with being Marist from what they learned about the mission and spirituality of the Society of Mary from their involvement at Marist School. Their response to what they have learned about the Society of Mary may mirror the reaction of Fr. Jean-Claude Colin to learning about beginning a Society of Mary. You may be surprised to learn that the idea for the Society of Mary did not originate with him though we regard him as its founder. However, when it was presented to him while at the seminary in Lyons, he responded, "That suits me." Today, we might say "I feel at home," or “I feel comfortable with

that," or more simply, "That's me." Most laity who identify as being Marist do so with conviction and enthusiasm and want to take advantage of programs and experiences that will deepen their Marist identity as a layperson.

The Society of Mary needs and wants to foster the development of Marist laity who identify with being Marist and wish to take it to the next level. This would involve more structured content and learning with other lay Marists like themselves. This would include forming a community and, together, taking a deeper dive into learning and living out the mission and spirituality of the Society of Mary. This would include prayer, fellowship, and service. It would be a time to discern if they are being called by a gracious choice of Mary to commit to living the Marist Way not only as individuals, but within a community that will support each other in doing so. Should they discern this to be their vocation, their commitment to do so for a specific period would be formalized by a commitment ceremony that would be renewable.

Opportunities to make a formal and permanent commitment to live as Marist laity will be provided.

For more information about the vital role the laity can assume in living the Marist Way of living the Gospel, please contact Mr. Mike Coveny, director of the Marist Way.