

Reflection from the Superior General

This Lent, as we accompany Jesus for forty days and forty nights into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, I wonder what particular temptations we Marists might be facing. What “words” might we choose to fight these temptations and whom might we turn to when we’re discouraged? (Matt. 4:1–11).

One temptation could be to turn the harsh “stones” of our real world into our “bread” of comfort food. The temptation to comfort and security. We can hear the voice of the tempter who says “stay within your comfort zones and make yourself secure. Whatever you do, don’t take risks. Don’t move!”. It is easy to justify a comfortable and sheltered life against the sometimes frightening challenges of our Marist calling radically embraced.

The Spirit of Mary calls us *to be completely emptied of all self-interest. Let them strive to deny themselves completely in all things: seeking not their own interests, but only those of Christ and Mary.* (Const.228)



We could be tempted, too, to see our own world as a type of holy city where we can want to “make our own unique mark”, doing my “own thing”, upon the parapet of the local temples. The temptation to be self-referential. The tempter says: “Go it alone! Find your own mission and guard your own space”.

Yet the Spirit of Mary calls us *to always bear in mind that they belong by a gracious choice to the family of the blessed Mary, mother of God, from whose name they are called Marists, and whom they have chosen from the beginning as their model and their first and perpetual superior.* (#228)

We can be tempted to build our own splendid Kingdoms which we come to believe are “ours”. The temptation to build our own Marist kingdoms - or to keep “our territory” - whatever the cost. We are called to build the Kingdom of God and resist any inclination to build the Kingdom of the Society of Mary. It is painful when we see our Units losing their iconic “Marist” ministries or for some of us to see our life’s ministries handed onto others, or abandoned. It can be a temptation to cling to these icons because, when the time has come to let them go, it can be very painful for us and for others.

The Spirit of Mary calls us to act always with such great poverty, humility, and modesty, simplicity of heart, and lack of all vanity and worldly ambition.... that while they must take up the various ministries by which the salvation of souls may be furthered, they may appear unknown, and even hidden, in the world. (#228).

After battling with the tempter, Jesus was so hungry and battered that he needed angels to look after him. Jesus was able to withstand the temptations over forty days in the desert by his profound sense that he was both called by the Father at his Baptism and also that he was sent on his mission to proclaim “the reign of God”.

When we are tempted these days we Marists have our own armoury which includes the profound sense that we have been called by Mary’s “gracious choice” and that we have a unique Marist mission entrusted to us. We are fortified to face our challenges by remaining faithful to the very end to our Marist call and our Marist mission as generations of Marists who have gone before us.

What temptations are we Marists facing this Lent? What “sacred words” from the Scriptures and from our own Marist wisdom tradition can we use to fight these temptations and lead us into a more profound participation in the Paschal mystery, of death leading to new life, this Holy Week? Who are “the angels” who strengthen us when we are battle-weary?

A blessed celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation this March 25!

Fraternally,

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