

Walking with Mary

***Reflections on our Journey with our
Sister in Faith***



BR. DAN O'RIORDAN

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to all those Marists of Champagnat who have paved the road for us Marists of today. May we continue to embrace their spirit and legacy with the gift of our lives and in how we continue to enhance our Marist Mission in today's world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank all my Marist Brothers, Lay Marists, Marist Young Adults and Marist Youth who have graced my journey, many who are heroes in my life and an inspiration to all.

I am grateful to my parents, family and teachers who passed onto me their faith and a great love and devotion to Mary, our Good Mother.

I am forever indebted to so many who have walked this journey with me and who continue to grace my life by their constant love and support.

I would like to acknowledge the Sisters of St. Ursula and the staff at Linwood Spiritual Center in Rhinecliff, NY for providing me the perfect retreat space to write the reflections that became this book.

I also express my sincere gratitude to Br. Donnell Neary, who edited this book, and to Br. Alfred George, who encouraged me to write it.

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FORWARD

Mary plays a unique role in the Church and even more so, for us, as Marists. She is greatly honored and, many times, put on a pedestal. How do we bring her back down, to make her more real, for inspiration in our own lives? How can we come to know her more as a companion on our own journeys? Pilgrimage hints at transformation. As we contemplate Mary's life and attitudes, how can we make them our own, thus opening us to transformation?

In this book, Br Dan invites us on portions of HIS journey. With his reflections on Mary's life, through his descriptions of Marial pilgrimage sites, and through the Marist places of importance, we have Dan's unique perspectives and experiences to guide us in our reflections on Mary's role in our own lives.

Br Dan relates the impact of these special places, moments and experiences that transformed him. He invites us to ponder, as Mary did. He provides us with questions for reflection. Dan gives us an invitation to open our hearts in a new way, to the presence of Mary being with us on our pilgrimage road. When Mary visits Elizabeth, she becomes the first person to carry Jesus to someone else and then to the world. Br Dan challenges us to discover how we can honor

Mary, truly, by finding ways to “make Jesus known and loved” as she did?

Walking With Mary can help us to ponder this central Marist challenge – carrying Jesus (God, Love) within us and allowing others to come to know this great Love.

It has been an honor to travel with Dan, both literally and figuratively, on this Marist faith journey. My hope is that reading this book will enhance that journey for you.

Maureen Hagan,

Director of USA Marist Lay Formation

INTRODUCTION

On a sunny but cold winter's day in February of 2021, I began a private retreat at a hermitage located on the property of Linwood Spiritual Center in Rhinecliff, NY, operated by the Sisters of St. Ursula. It is a beautiful spacious property overlooking the Hudson River and the surrounding hills of the Mid-Hudson Valley, which were snow-covered from a number of recent heavy snowstorms. As I had done on my previous two retreats, I dedicated several hours each day of this retreat to outline and begin writing my next spiritual book. While several ideas for my next book had been percolating in my head and heart over the past few months, it was during a snowshoeing hike on the first afternoon of my retreat that I finally settled on the theme and focus of the pages that follow in this reflection.

For my congregation of Marist Brothers, Mary, our Good Mother, has always played a pivotal role in our history. She holds a very special place in our hearts as Brothers and in the hearts of all Marists of Champagnat. When we were founded by St. Marcellin Champagnat in 1817, he entrusted our order to her care and her protection. He firmly believed in the power of her intercession and often witnessed his own reliance on her as our "Ordinary Resource." Throughout our more than two-hundred-year Marist history, she continues to be central to our Marist spirituality and how we approach

ministry and respond to the many needs of our world and to the young people entrusted to our care.

From my earliest memories, Mary was a central figure in the spiritual practices of my own family. Family rosaries and pilgrimages to Marial shrines were a regular part of our living out and expressing our faith and prayer lives. While Mary chose to live her life often in the background as hidden and unknown, she nevertheless remained faithful to God in accepting her role as mother to Jesus. She always remained present to Him and modeled for us how our focus should always be on making Him known and loved. She not only played the role as his loving mother but also as His first faithful disciple and eventually, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven, as a custodian and spiritual mentor to the early followers of "His Way."

As I reflect back, Mary has always been a constant presence and support to me but yet never a person who wanted to be in the spotlight. She always preferred instead to allow the focus to be on her Son, Jesus. Br. Sean Sammon, former Superior General of the Marist Brothers, frequently describes Mary as our "Sister in Faith." For many Marists that image of our being able to walk with Mary as a fellow disciple of Jesus is an inspiring model of how we need to travel our paths of faith and servanthood.

In the pages that follow, I will share some thoughts on a number of images and musings on Mary's life; some of my experiences visiting a number of Marial places of pilgrimage; highlight a few key Marist stories connected to Mary; focus on how we might embody some of her virtues and offer some ways to pray to Mary as well as highlight some of her titles and annual Feast days.

It is my deepest desire that in sharing these simple contemplations on Mary, that other Marists might come to deeper appreciate and utilize her willingness to be our "Ordinary Resource" and radically live out her final words about her Son that she expressed in the Gospels when she said, "Do whatever He tells you." (John 2:5).

“Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything, because Mary always has her adorable Son within her arms or in her heart.”

St. Marcellin

Champagnat

Reflections on Mary's Journey

Mary's "Fiat"

In the story of the Annunciation scene, Gabriel comes to Mary with a rather unique offer: that God wants her to give birth to the son of God. God places the entire salvation of our world on the openness of this young Jewish girl to willingly say "Yes" to radically changing the history of our world. Mary was a mere teenager and engaged to be married to Joseph. She must have been frightened of the possible consequences of her "Yes." Would Joseph abandon her? Would she face persecution from the laws of her time by becoming pregnant? Would her decision to become pregnant as an unwed teenage girl bring ridicule to her parents and family? How would anyone ever believe her story? Yet despite these realities and probably many other fears, we hear Mary's response to Gabriel, "May it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38).

Many times in our life we may not choose to say no to others because if we do, we may lose favor with them. We often concern ourselves about what they might think about us. Sometimes we may respond yes to a situation so that we might be able to influence or control the outcome of an event. Mary's yes was not like that at all. Her yes was one of complete surrender to God's will. She had no idea of the journey or consequences her "fiat" would have on the course of her life or the impact that it would have on all of eternity. God sometimes wants us to respond with a similar yes of complete

surrender without our worrying about all the ramifications that such a decision will have on our life. What grace do we need in order to be able to make such a yes and surrender that part of our life that God may be asking from us at a given moment in our journeys?

Mary modeled for us the perfect path to discipleship when she declared herself to be the “handmaid of the Lord.” May we, as Marists of Champagnat, likewise follow in her footprints and declare our own “fiat” in how we respond with our lives.

The great spiritual writer, Meister Eckhart reminded us, six hundred years ago, what this birth can be for us, when he wrote:

“What good is it to me that Mary gave birth to the son of God fourteen hundred years ago, and I do not also give birth to the Son of God in my time and in my culture? We are all meant to be mothers of God. God is always needing to be born.”

When reflecting on Mary’s willingness to bring Jesus into our world, we must ask how will we allow Christ to be born again during this period of history through us? As Marists of Champagnat, we are each called to be like Mary and bring God into our world in our own time and way. As we move forward, let us each find real ways to allow the Light of our world to be reborn in and through us daily.

As our own journeys continue, might we be open to listening to what future plans God might have for our lives? When our Gabriel

arrives, will we have the freedom, courage and willingness to respond like Mary? What will our “Fiat” be?



Mary' Fiat

Mary, our First Evangelizer

For a moment, let us consider three insights that are raised in the story of Mary's going in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The first in regard to evangelization, the second in regard to mentors or spiritual companions in our life and the third how Mary's response or song might be a good reflection for us to embrace in our own lives.

When Mary left for the hill country to visit Elizabeth, she became the world's first evangelizer. She was the first to bring Jesus into the life of another person and eventually to all the world. She carried Christ within her on that long journey through the hills of Judea and brought Him with her to meet Elizabeth. John the Baptist leapt in Elizabeth's womb when Mary arrived because he knew Christ was present. We too, as Marists, must be evangelizers in the midst of all those we visit, by likewise carrying Jesus within us and allowing others to come to know and love Him.

Secondly, we know that Mary went in haste to visit Elizabeth and to be of service to her, who was already six months pregnant. But this service that Mary did of helping Elizabeth was also enriching and of equal importance to Mary herself.

After the Angel Gabriel visits Mary, she departs with haste to go and be of assistance to her cousin Elizabeth, who was already six

months pregnant. This would not be an easy journey for her as it would mean an eighty-mile trek through desert and a hilly terrain before she would arrive at the house of Zachariah. Given the news that she had just received, why was it so critical for her to drop everything and immediately seek out Elizabeth? She was a teenage girl who had just learned she was pregnant. She needed someone to confide in who would understand her plight and someone who was a trusted “*soul friend*.” She did not want to be judged, challenged or questioned but lovingly accepted by a girlfriend who could relate to her situation. Mary certainly must have been filled with many fears in how she would explain her circumstance to her parents, to Joseph, her fiancé, and what this news could mean for her, her family, and Joseph given the strict laws and customs of that time period.

A part of Mary certainly desired to be of help to Elizabeth in her time of need, but what happens is that Elizabeth equally ministers to Mary and allows her to come to accept her place in divine history in bearing God’s son. Not just anyone can handle or be trusted with our most challenging moments. Elizabeth is the one person that Mary knows will understand; She is Mary’s spiritual companion. We all need to have trusted “*soul friends*” to accompany us on our spiritual and life journeys. I have been graced to have had and continue to have many such Elizabeths in my life. As Marists of Champagnat we need not be afraid to share the interiority of our inner lives with an understanding mentor or spiritual director. Such opportunities are a

grace and will allow us to gain clarity and understanding for the many paths that we may be called to travel in response to God's call in our lives.

Mary's journey was not easy, but she did not travel it alone. We may also at times be called to difficult work, but we can always count on God to be with us, very often through the ones given to us as companions for our journeys.

Who are our spiritual companions? Who is the Elizabeth in our lives? To whom would we go at times of mystery and need, as Mary did to Elizabeth?

Thirdly as Marists we are called to be the face of the Marian Church and so our life and story should be reflective of Mary's life and Story. Her song as expressed in her Magnificat must become our song. It's the song of the whole Church. It's the song of anyone who has experienced God's overflowing generosity and grace. It's the song of everyone who begins to see that God loves them individually, personally, and unconditionally. God has chosen me. Despite my sin and weaknesses, he still loves me and walks with me. Yes, my spirit does rejoice in God my savior! Maybe sometime in the days ahead, sit and pray with those words of Mary's Magnificat and make them your own.



Mary Going in Haste

The Crib, the Cross and the Altar through Mary's eyes.

For us as Marists, we have often reflected on how we might encounter Jesus in three special places, namely at the Crib, the Cross and the Altar. Marcellin pointed to these as a way for us to draw closer to the life of Christ. Let us consider for a few minutes the impact of these three special places through the eyes of Mary.

Mary at the Crib

Mary's "Fiat" led her down many roads that no mother would ever wish to travel. Most expecting mothers would probably hope to relax and remain comfortable during the final weeks of a pregnancy. But Mary had to approach her last remaining weeks of carrying Jesus in her womb by needing to leave her home with Joseph and travel on the back of a donkey to the village of Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary had to make this trip because the Roman Emperor Augustus had ordered everyone to return to the town where their families originally came from for a census. This journey from Nazareth, in the northern highlands of Galilee, to Bethlehem is a 90-mile journey across a rugged desert terrain. Many scholars estimate that their journey would have allowed them to travel only 10-15 miles a day at best.

What thoughts did Mary have during this most uncomfortable and difficult week leading up to the birth of Jesus? Did she long to have a midwife with her that would assist her during the birth? Was she fearful of this long journey or the thought that she might not make it to Bethlehem before giving birth? What allowed her to make it through these long difficult days and nights? I like to think that one reason so little is written in scripture about Joseph is that words simply cannot describe the profound love, support and care he provided throughout his life to Mary and eventually to Jesus.

When Mary and Joseph finally made it to Bethlehem, no place would welcome them or offer them shelter and needed hospitality. As the hour of Mary's giving birth became more apparent with each closed door, a meager stable with a make-shift crib of straw would become the delivery room for the savior of our world. What thoughts must have raced through her mind with each unwelcomed response to her need on that cold winter night? What impact did the acceptance and acknowledgment of the Shepherds and the Wise Men have on reassuring Mary that her Son, "Emmanuel", truly was "God with us."

Later in Jesus' life, when He was speaking about Nazareth, He would proclaim, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." Mary and Joseph must have had similar feelings and thoughts as they arrived in the ancestral home of Joseph to be so sadly turned away at such a time of need.



Mary's Journey to Bethlehem

Mary at the Cross

When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the temple as was prescribed by Jewish custom, Simeon prophesized that the infant Jesus would become the long-awaited Messiah. He also shared with Mary another prophesy that “Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also.” (Luke 2:35). We know Mary “pondered many things in her heart”, I wonder how often did she ponder or question what that piercing would mean for her in life?

While John the Baptist was the person who baptized Jesus in the river Jordan, it was Mary, His mother who really led Him into His ministry as a miracle worker by prodding Him to perform what would become known as the Miracle of Cana. She knew Jesus better than anyone and at some point must have accepted the divine reality that He was not just her son, but also God’s only son and someone who came into the world to light it on fire through His gospel messages of love, forgiveness and compassion.

After three years of Jesus’ itinerant preaching and healing, Simeon’s earlier prophesy became a sad reality in Mary’s life. She watched in horror as her Son endured the mockery of a false trial, was savagely beaten, was condemned to be crucified, and was paraded through the streets of Jerusalem on His journey to the hill of Calvary. She stood there on that hill and must have shrieked in agony as she

watched her beloved Son be nailed to that cross and hung to die between two criminals. Has any heart been more pierced by a sword than Mary's heart was on that grueling day? Has any mother ever endured as much pain and suffering as Mary did that day? She did not run away from it, but rather embraced it. My enduring image of the crucifixion scene is not of Jesus hanging on that cross, but the image depicted in Michelangelo's *La Pietà* of a loving, heartbroken mother holding the broken body of Jesus in her arms just as she often had done when he was an infant. She was the first to embrace Him when He came into our world and was the last to embrace Him before He was placed in the tomb. The image of Mary embracing the crucified Jesus is a symbol we must each likewise embrace. There can be no Easter morning and Resurrection without the agony of Good Friday. Jesus knew the road He was meant to walk. Although His humanity would have Him ask His Father for that cup to be taken away from Him, if possible, His divinity and incredible love of His father and each of us allowed Him to accept that cup and to embrace his suffering and death.

When Jesus was dying on the cross, He "saw his mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:25-27)

As Marists of Champagnat, we too are one of Jesus' beloved disciples. He likewise is asking us to take Mary as our Mother and into our homes. He also is entrusting us to her care and protection and asking her to accept us as her own.



La Pietà

Mary at the Altar

Although scripture only names the twelve apostles as those who shared in Jesus' last supper, I image that few Jewish men of that time period had the culinary skills to prepare all the dishes that are served as part of a traditional seder meal. Unless they wanted to be like John the Baptist and only eat locust and wild honey on that sacred night, I believe it is safe to assume that women were also present around that same table. We know Mary was in Jerusalem a few hours later when most of the apostles abandoned Jesus from fear of also being captured and quickly went into hiding to save themselves. As there were no trains or quick methods of transportation that would have allowed Mary to quickly travel the ninety miles from Nazareth when Jesus was arrested, she must have been in the city on that night. It is hard to image that Jesus would have celebrated this special occasion and would not have ensured His mother was present, if she was in the city, as I suspect she must have been.

It is our Catholic belief that the origins of our Eucharistic Liturgy that we celebrate today dates back to the Last Supper when Jesus gave us the gifts of His own Body and Blood to spiritually nourish our bodies and souls. Our Catholic Mass has evolved greatly over time. Two generations ago, all Masses were in Latin with the priest facing the altar and not facing the congregation as we know today. Two Thousand years ago, the Catholic Mass or even Christianity had not yet been truly formalized. Jesus' Disciples and

the early “followers of this new way” had to meet in secret or face death for being a believer and follower of Jesus. For many years, early Christian communities celebrated an “Agape meal” which carried on Jesus’ instructions to “Do this in memory of me.” They share bread and wine and broke open the Gospel often by way of the oral tradition of passing down stories from one generation to the next.

In the days following Christ’s Resurrection, the disciples were scared and unsure of how to proceed. They often gathered in the “upper room” and hoped for signs to show them the way forward. I believe that the one constant voice that allowed them to grow into the eventual proclaimers and martyrs that they would become was the voice of Mary. She brought Jesus into our world, she loved and nourished Him as He grew from an infant into the Savior He would become. She answered God’s call and fulfilled her “fiat” mostly by remaining hidden and unknown to the world. I believe she continued to work quietly in the background to ensure that her Son’s newly founded church would succeed by nurturing and encouraging those early followers. She had endured more suffering than any of the apostles on the day of Jesus’ death and was among the first to see Him rise from the dead. It only makes sense that she would have dedicated her remaining years to keep His memory and mission alive by being a vital part of ensuring His lasting legacy of celebrating Eucharist be passed on for future generations of believers.

Mary came to know the harsh realities of ruthless governments at all three of these special Marist Places, the Crib, the Cross and the Altar. She was forced to make a cruel journey during the final weeks of her pregnancy because of one Governor's mandate. She endured watching her beloved Son whipped, condemned, tortured and killed because of another ruler who washed his hands of the matter. She finally helped lead the apostles and the earlier followers of this newly formed church, centered on her Son's teachings, during a time when it was forbidden to be a "follower of the Way" and even punishable by death. How did she tolerate and remain such a presence in such a society? Quite simply, the guiding authority in her life was not any local ruler or government official, but rather the same God to whom she professed, "May it be done to me according to your word."



Mary with the Apostles

“Faith is not the clinging to a shrine but an endless pilgrimage of the heart.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Some Marial Pilgrimage Sites

Our Lady of Knock, Ireland

My earliest memories of making a pilgrimage are to the famed Marial shrine located in a small village in County Mayo in the west of Ireland. My parents would stop there annually for Mass, confession, a rosary and to walk the peaceful grounds often in the rain. We would always end our pilgrimage day by filling up a number of Holy Water bottles which would be used daily to bless ourselves every time we left home. My mom always kept a small bottle of Knock Holy water in her car and would bless herself with it and sprinkle it on any of us in the car before she would start the car as a way of asking Mary's protection for whatever trip she was about to begin.

The story of Knock dates back to 1879, when Mary, St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist appeared, on a very wet evening, initially to a young local girl who was accompanied by a woman from the village. They appeared near the Gable wall of the village's small church. The young girl ran home to tell her parents. Within minutes twenty-nine locals had gathered to witness the apparition which lasted approximately two hours. Many cures and healings are associated with visitors to the shrine of Our Lady of Knock's. Many crutches have been left at the spot where the apparition is believed to have occurred by those who have been cured.



**My Last trip to Knock in 2019 with Br. Owen Ormsby and Br.
Donnell Neary**

Lourdes, France

When I was about seven years of age, my parents took me on my first pilgrimage that really involved major traveling. While we always made a pilgrimage stop in Knock annually, it really never felt like a major trip as we spent a great deal of time in Ireland and as part of our stay in Ireland, enjoyed a car ride to Knock which was only a couple of hours and always a fun day out.

Our family pilgrimage trip to Lourdes occurred during a February school break. We flew from JFK in NY to Barcelona in Spain and then quickly boarded a train and traveled for what seemed like an eternity from Barcelona across the Pyrenees to the French town of Lourdes. The trip itself was almost a full twenty-four hours of traveling from the time we left our house to our arrival at our hotel in Lourdes.

I remember it being bitterly cold during our days there, especially when my mom insisted that we all take part in the spiritual blessing of being submerged into the holy waters of Lourdes at their famous “Baths.” It was the single coldest moment of my life. At the time, I did not appreciate or comprehend any of the symbolism of this ritual in which pilgrims ask for a spiritual healing before entering the Baths. I think I only prayed for survival and not to die from the flu,

which was as much as my seven-year-old mind or spirituality could muster at that moment.

What I do remember most and still cherish from that pilgrimage was attending one of the nightly processions to the Grotto of Lourdes. Thousands of pilgrims sung Ave Maria as we each carried candles and made our way to the famed Grotto. I was amazed by countless crutches left by previous pilgrims who had received a miraculous cure or healing at this sacred shrine. As we sang songs and recited the rosary, I can still recall a deep and profound sense of peace and tranquility that made the long trip there and the freezing water of the Baths seem all worth it. Looking back, it was the first time I really experienced a deep sense of prayer and the presence of God.

Later during my college years, I volunteered on a few occasions to assist a number of folks confined to wheelchairs on their pilgrimages to Lourdes. Each of these occasions were a gift and blessing in my life. I'm proud to say that the St. Marcellin Champagnat Service program from Archbishop Molloy, my Alma Mater, frequently travel to Lourdes to likewise volunteer to assist many disabled pilgrims.

The story of Lourdes occurred in 1858 and was made famous in the 1943 hit movie, *The Song of Bernadette*. There were 18 actual

apparitions at Lourdes. The young girl to whom Mary appeared was canonized, St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1933.



The Archbishop Molloy St. Marcellin Champagnat Society on one of their many Service Trips to Lourdes

Fatima, Portugal

My parents and a number of my uncles and aunts made several pilgrimages to Fatima in Portugal. They always returned with religious gifts such as rosaries or holy cards for all my cousins and me. Sadly, I never had the opportunity to make this trip with them but was lucky enough to be able to make my own pilgrimage there in 2013. I knew I would have a stop-over flight in Lisbon on my way to Senegal, Africa and took the opportunity to extend the stop-over for a couple of days for a short pilgrimage experience to this famed Marian shrine.

Opposite from my first pilgrimage to Lourdes when I embraced frigid weather and snow, my trip to Portugal was under very oppressive heat. My favorite memory of my two days in Fatima were several quiet hours I had to pray in the magnificent basilica of the Holy Rosary.

The Shrine of Fatima is remembered for not only the six apparitions that Mary made to three young children, but also for the thousands that witnessed the “miracle of the sun” on October 13, 1917. The young children also would eventually reveal three secrets that Mary shared with them including a special prayer for the conversion of Russia. During each of Mary’s appearances in Fatima she asked the children to pray the rosary.



The Basilica of the Holy Rosary

Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina

My mom had a great devotion to Mary and tried to make at least one pilgrimage to a Marial shrine each year. On a few occasions, she had attempted to make such a trip to Medjugorje, but for one reason or another, her plans never worked out. In 1998, she developed Ménière's disease which is the deterioration of the inner ear drum and often causes severe vertigo attacks. As a result of this newly acquired condition, mom stopped driving and was resigned to the possibility that she might never fly again. She had flown to Ireland at least a few times a year for the previous forty years before she developed this ear affliction. She spent a twenty-five-year career working for Pan American Airlines which allowed our family to enjoy extensive free travel for many years.

Two years later, Br. Dave Cooney, one of the Brothers I was living with at the time in West Virginia, was planning a pilgrimage to Medjugorje. I convinced my Mom; this was her opportunity to finally make a pilgrimage to the one remaining Marial Shrine she had wanted to visit for so many years. Although, she was fearful of what difficulties her medical condition might cause her, she agreed to come on the trip. Her Doctor assured her that medication would prevent her from having a severe attack of vertigo on the plane trip.

Medjugorje became a popular place of pilgrimage in the 1980s. The apparitions of Mary to six local children began in 1981 on a nearby hillside called Mount Podbrdo. Mary continues to appear to these visionaries and her monthly messages have consistently focused on bringing us closer to her son, Jesus. She continually stressed the importance of frequently engaging in prayer, fasting, scripture, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of penance.

My pilgrimage to this Holy place continues to be one of the most sacred and faith deepening experiences of my life. A number of dramatic events occurred for me during my week there.

The first was an experience with my mom, she asked if I would go up to the top of Mt. Podbrdo and ask Mary for a healing for her. While I was happy to do that for my mom, Br. Dave and I were able to convince her that we would escort her to the top so she could make that sacred walk herself. Walking to the top of Apparition Hill was a dream I had heard her speak about for many years. We took a taxi from our guest house to the start of the trail and slowly made our way to the top ensuring my mom took a number of breaks. She was truly overwhelmed with joy when she finally made it to statue of Mary that now stands on the top of that mountain and marks the place of the original apparitions. We prayed a rosary for her intentions and for the next five years she never had a vertigo attack. She was having multiple attacks weekly up until then.

The second profound experience of my pilgrimage occurred as a result of a chance conversation with a local priest. He asked if I had traveled with one of the large pilgrimage groups that were there that week. I explained that I had traveled with another Marist Brother and three other pilgrims. He asked me about the Marist Brothers and I explained our history of being founded as part of the original society of Mary. He wrote down the address of the home of Vicka Ivanković, one of the visionaries. He told me to bring only Br. Dave with me and to meet him at her house at 4:00 pm. When we arrived, there already was a crowd outside of her modest home. My new priest acquaintance was waiting for us and brought us inside Vicka's home. One of the rooms on the ground floor had been converted into a small chapel. We were invited to join Vicka during her daily apparition. There were about eight of us who joined her to say the rosary. About halfway through the second decade, everyone went silent as she became almost trance like and intently listened to Mary's message for that day. Although we could not see Mary, each of us felt an amazing sense of complete peace during the entire time. Vicka briefly shared with us the message she received that day which focused on Mary's asking us to fast on Saturdays as a sacrifice for the many needs of the suffering children in our world. She stressed that such sacrifices could alleviate much unnecessary suffering of many children. She encouraged us to continue to pray a rosary each day.

My third faith-enriching experience from that week occurred each afternoon for a two-hour period around the time of the ongoing apparitions. While I had very prayerful and sacred moments at the other Marial shrines of Knock, Fatima and Lourdes, this experience was profoundly different. Surrounding the perimeter of all of the other shrines I had visited were a countless number of souvenir shops that cashed in on the large number of visiting pilgrims. In some instances, it was really annoying as vendors would stand outside the walls of that shrine and constantly try to persuade pilgrims to buy anything with Mary's image. In Medjugorje, it was simply different. Yes, there were many religious stores to buy religious articles to likewise bring home, but for that two-hour period every merchant closed its doors and went across the street and joined with locals and visitors in prayer. Another unexplainable event I witnessed during this daily prayer time was that at the precise moment that the apparition would begin, every bird in the town flew in large groupings and landed on the roof of the church and the surrounding trees. Once the apparition ended, the birds would again fly away. Each day it was like clockwork. It seemed as if even the birds of that sacred town knew when to stop and pray.

Another remarkable and historical fact about Medjugorje is that it has survived numerous nearby wars and bombings. Most local towns and cities including Sarajevo were destroyed or heavily damaged in the 1990's, but not a single pilgrim has ever been harmed

on pilgrimage there. It would seem that the town has a great defender and is under Mary's protection.



Pilgrimage to Medjugorje with my mom 2000

El Santuario de Chimayo, the Lourdes of the Southwest

In the spring semester of 2009, I made a 100-day sabbatical retreat at the Sangre De Christo Renewal Center on the outskirts of Santa Fe, NM. As Easter approached, the staff offered us the opportunity to celebrate Good Friday at New Mexico's sacred pilgrimage place, El Santuario de Chimayo.

El Santuario de Chimayo was made famous from an event that occurred on Good Friday in 1810. A local man named Don Bernardo was praying on a dark night in the nearby hills and saw a light coming from the valley below. When he investigated, the light came from a spot of dirt in the middle of nowhere. He began digging at the spot and unearthed an elaborate wooden crucifix, five feet high. Don Bernardo and some other locals carried the crucifix in procession back to their local church. The next day, however, they awoke to find that the crucifix had disappeared. Retracing their steps, they discovered that it had returned to the original site. Don Bernardo and his friends again carried it away, but the crucifix returned. After the third effort, they concluded that God wanted the crucifix to remain where it was, at Chimayo.

Soon after a chapel was built on the spot where the object was discovered. In time, pilgrims began to come to rub their hands in the soil that held the crucifix. Miraculous healing properties were

attributed to the shrine. It was similar to Lourdes, but instead of water, pilgrims used Holy dirt.

From the time that the church in Chimayo was built, pilgrims from many surrounding areas would set forth on pilgrimage to Chimayo every Good Friday. Our retreat group had the option of hiking the 18-mile pilgrim walk from the retreat house to Chimayo and be driven home after the service or be transported by vans both ways to join in the noon Good Friday service at El Santuario de Chimayo. Br. Bill Fleming, a Christian Brother from Australia and I were the only two brave souls to accept the challenge of making this Good Friday Camino. We left the retreat center about 4:00 am and thanks to an abundantly moonlit sky, we easily followed our trail over the Sangre De Christo mountains for about ten miles until we gained access to the road that went to Chimayo. Although seeing the trail was easy enough, walking it was anything but easy as there were steep climbs and descents. By the time we reached our roadway, I knew I had gained a number of bad blisters that I would feel for days to come. As I walked that roadway in the early morning sun, I focused on Jesus' journey to calvary and the agonizing pains he must have suffered with each step. We soon came upon an elderly woman who was making the pilgrimage and was walking with her teenage grandson. As we started to converse, I learned that she had been making this annual pilgrimage every year since she was 6 years of age and this was her 75th consecutive Good Friday trek. What made her story even more

remarkable was that her starting point was Albuquerque which was a 100-mile journey. She and her grandson had been walking for four days.

By mid-morning we arrived to El Santuario de Chimayo and enjoyed breakfast with our new pilgrim friends. Our fellow retreat members joined us for a rosary around one of the many banners of Our Lady of Guadalupe that a group of pilgrims had carried. We visited the church, collected our ziplock bags of Holy Dirt (which I still keep in my prayer space in my bedroom) and joined the thousands of pilgrims that had journeyed near and far to commemorate the passion of Christ.



El Santuario de Chimayo 2009

Guadalupe, Mexico

I have been blessed to know many of our Mexican Marists over the years and was always impressed by their deep devotion and love for their patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Every year on December 12th, our Church celebrates this feast day. It commemorates the apparitions in 1531 of Mary to a young Mexican boy, Juan Diego.

When the young Juan Diego explained his encounter of Mary to his local Bishop, he was not believed and told by the Bishop to ask her, if she appeared again, for a miraculous sign to prove to him her identity.

When Mary again appeared to Juan Diego, she instructed the young boy to go to the top of Tepeyac Hill and pick the roses that would be there and present them to the Bishop. Juan Diego did as Mary instructed, even though roses do not bloom in that part of the world during the month of December. The roses that Juan Diego found were not native to Mexico. Mary met the boy there and carefully arranged the flowers in his cloak. When Juan Diego opened his cloak before the Bishop on December 12, the flowers fell to the floor, and on the fabric was the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Juan Diego's cloak or "tilma" has become Mexico's most popular religious and cultural symbol. It is on display in the shrine of

Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is built on the top of Tepeyac Hill, just outside of Mexico City. It is a most popular pilgrimage site, and this feast day is celebrated widely in all Mexican communities.

The young Juan Diego was canonized in 2002 and became the first Catholic indigenous Saint from the Americas. The celebration of this Marial feast day is also an opportunity to remember that God is not afraid to utilize young people in deepening the faith of His people as He did with young Juan Diego. In fact, throughout history God has empowered young people to be powerful witnesses of faith. From David defeating Goliath, to a young Jewish girl named Mary who responded “Yes,” to other children, like Juan Diego, who also witnessed Marial apparitions at Fatima and Medjugorje. I have been graced to have known many young people who at times have been the face of God in my own life. As we Marists journey through our lives, may we always hold sacred the lives of all children, who constantly reflect God’s image and love.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington D.C.

During my six years at Bishop Donahue High School in West Virginia, I traveled with a group of our students each January to the Pro-Life march and rally in our nations' capital to join in solidarity with many others in praying for an end to the slaughter of so many unborn children in our country.

Through a friend of one of our parents we were able to travel to D.C. the day before the march and sleep in the basement of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. This was always a highlight as we would gather to say a rosary as well as be together for a eucharist in our country's National Catholic shrine which is dedicated to Mary.

One of my most memorable moments of these trips was when we were able to arrange for students from a number of our USA Marist schools to gather together on the morning of the march. It was great to feel so connected to other fellow young Marists from around our country and to join together for a prayer to our Good Mother.



Our National Shrine

Our Lady's Well, Ballyhea, Cork, Ireland

Ireland has a long history of deep devotion and patronage to Mary. All across the country, there are numerous shrines, churches and places of worship dedicated to her. She for many generations has truly been the spiritual “Queen of Ireland.” I was blessed to grow up and live for many years next to one of these many places for Marial prayer.

For centuries, local pilgrims have made frequent prayerful visitations to this small Marial shrine with a backdrop of the Ballyhoura Mountains in County Cork. My Dad's home in Ireland was only a few hundred feet away from the entrance to the shrine and my uncle's farm is just down the road. Our family, for generations, have enjoyed many family rosaries as well as annual outdoor Masses at this site. It is a beautiful, quiet prayerful place with lovely surrounding gardens. A circular path featuring the Stations of the Cross are also part of these sacred grounds. It is one of my favorite places to pray as I have so many great memories of moments spent both in quiet personal prayer as well as with so many in my family.



A visit to Our Lady's well with my Uncle Maurice 2021

“This is our mission: to ensure that the new generations discover the face of God and have life in abundance. Following in the footsteps of Champagnat, we also must respond to the cry of the Montagnes who surround us. We cannot see a child without loving him and telling him how much God loves him. ”

Gathered Around the Same Table (42)

Special Marial Places and Events in our Marist History

Notre Dame de l'Hermitage, France

This five-story building stands as one of our most iconic symbols of Champagnat's legacy and as a witness to what young people can accomplish. It was built by Marcellin and our early Brothers (mostly young kids) in response to our first community's growing need for a larger dwelling as well as through Champagnat's dream to have a secluded place for the spiritual growth of his Brothers. It was created by chiseling away the side of a granite mountain and using these freed rocks for its foundation and walls.

I have been graced to have made numerous trips and pilgrimages to l'Hermitage, our Marist ancestral home, which was built in honor of Mary and dedicated by Marcellin to Our Lady. The building itself allows pilgrims to feel like they are walking on holy ground as the history and stories of our Marist origins are brought to life. One of my favorite experiences at l'Hermitage was on, several occasions, being able to carve out some quiet prayer time in the chapel. I would always quietly sit and imagine how Marcellin would end each of his days in that same chapel by placing the names of Brothers or other intentions into a heart shaped locket that hung around the statue of Our Lady of l'Hermitage before which he so often prayed.



Pilgrimage to l'Hermitage 2011

Our Lady of Fourvière

The basilica of Fourvière is located on top of a high cliff looking over the city of Lyon and can be seen for miles from any direction. On top of its 12th century church that stands next to the current Basilica is a beautiful gold statue of Mary, who is the patroness of France. This older chapel played a significant part in our Marist History. In July of 1816, on the day after Marcellin's ordination from the nearby diocesan seminary, he and a group of his fellow newly-ordained priests celebrated mass in this chapel. During that liturgy this group of young priests made what has become known as the pledge of Fourvière, which was a promise to create a Society of Mary. In the years that followed all four branches of our Marist Family trace their roots to this historic moment and pledge.



Pilgrimage stop at Fourvière 2012

Our Lady of Le Puy

On several of my trips to L'Hermitage, I had the privilege to visit the ancient pilgrimage site of Le Puy. It is a unique medieval town with numerous historical Marial features. The main church is the site where the Salve Regina was first prayed after having been composed by Adhémar of Monteil, a local bishop during the years 1087-1100. It was especially meaningful to join with fellow Marists and sing the Salve in this church given its long connection to our Marist history. Champagnat requested that the Brothers begin and end their days with this ancient prayer as a way of entrusting all our needs and intentions to Mary, our Good Mother.

Jean-Claude Courveille, one of Marcellin's fellow seminarians, was very instrumental in putting forward the conception of creating our Society of Mary. As a young child, Jean-Claude had a serious ailment with his eyes and traveled to Le Puy on pilgrimage seeking a cure. His eyesight was miraculously restored in the church of Le Puy. He explained that while he was in the church he had a vision of Mary, who told him she would like him to help create a society in her honor just as the Jesuits had created, the Society of Jesus, in honor of her Son.

Two of the unique features and trademarks of Le Puy include a magnificent statue of Notre Dame of France built on top of a

towering 2,500 ft high hill of volcanic rock as well as it being the original starting location for the Camino de Santiago.



2016 Pilgrimage to Le Puy with USA Marist Brothers

Memorare in the Snow

One of the stops on most pilgrimage tours to historical Marist places includes a visit to the remains of the Donnet farmhouse, which is located about 12 miles from LaValla on top of a hill overlooking a steep valley. On a winter's night in February of 1823, this farmhouse became an historic refuge to Champagnat and our Marist future. Earlier that day, Marcellin and Br. Stanislaus had set out from LaValla to visit one of our early communities to check on a sick Brother living there. They hiked across mountains and valleys and were relieved to find that the sick Brother was doing fine. The community tried to convince Marcellin and Stanislaus to stay the night as daylight would soon end, but Marcellin said there was much to be done and he needed to return home. As they traversed the mountainous landscape on their return journey, a major winter blizzard encompassed the valley through which they were hiking. They soon became disoriented and lost and knew that they would not survive a night in the freezing storm. Stanislaus fell from exhaustion and Marcellin did the only thing he knew that might save them. He asked Stanislaus to join him in praying a Memorare for the intention of Mary to save them from their pending death. As they stood up from a kneeling position, they could see a light above them flickering through the snow. They followed this light which turned out to be the light of Mr. Donnet's lantern. He had risen to go to his barn to check on his animals. What makes the story remarkable is that there was no reason for Mr. Donnet to go outside in the snowstorm as his farmhouse had an enclosed passageway to the barn. He welcomed Marcellin and Stanislaus to ride

out the storm in the warmth and safety of his home. Champagnat and all Marists believe that it was Mary's intervention through that Memorare that allowed Mr. Donnet to go out into the snow that wintery night with his saving lantern. Had Mary not responded to that cry for help, Champagnat's dream and our Marist history would have quickly collapsed on that mountain slope.



The Donnet Farmhouse

Chapel at Leytra, near LaValla

While I was doing vocation work for our Province, I led a number of pilgrimages to l'Hermitage. During one of these trips, I retraced Marcellin's steps on a pilgrimage that he had made himself. During 1822, the Little Brothers of Mary faced a major crisis. They needed vocations and needed them quickly. Marcellin decided to do what he always did in any moment of difficulty and entrust this burning need to the heart of Mary, our Ordinary Resource. He decided to make a special pilgrimage to the Chapel at Leytra, a small chapel on the outskirts of LaValla and pray to Mary that she might send recruits to allow "her project" to continue. Within days of this prayer pilgrimage for more vocations, eight young men arrived at the door of l'Hermitage asking to join our order. This story is but one of many examples of the amazing trust and confidence that Marcellin had in Mary's ability to respond to our needs. I was grateful to likewise travel in Champagnat's footsteps to entrust the vocation needs of our Province to the heart of Mary. I prayed that she might inspire many young USA Marists to join our Mission as either Brothers or Lay Marists. I believe she has and will continue to answer those prayers for our USA Province.



Hiking from l'Hermitage to the Chapel at Leytra

“For Marcellin their practice is a way of living Mary’s attitudes in everyday life. He is convinced that these virtues or attitudes are life-giving expressions of love.”

-Water from the Rock (99)

Our Three Marial Violets



The three Marial virtues of humility, simplicity, and modesty come to us directly from Marcellin Champagnat. These virtues point to identifying qualities that should easily be recognizable in all Marists and are the very characteristics that we as Marists should strive to embrace in our lives.

Marcellin compared these three virtues to three violets hidden in a garden which in their own way radiate the glory to God with their vibrant colors, yet often remain hidden by their size. These tiny flowers of stunning beauty are native and grow wild on the land surrounding l'Hermitage.

In his Circular, “Marist Apostolic Spirituality,” our former Superiors-General, Br Charles Howard, writes the following description of these Marist virtues,

“Humility is a basic element in our relationships since it has to do with clear self-understanding. It means knowing and accepting the truth about ourselves, being honest with ourselves, being free of pretension and self-delusion. Simplicity has to do with the way we live the truth of ourselves, giving us a personal transparency, which allows others to know us and to relate to us as we are. Modesty can be seen as the result of humility and simplicity especially in the respect that we show to others, our sensitivity towards them in what we say and in what we do. These Marist virtues give “a quality of authenticity and kindness to our relationships with our Brothers and with other people that we meet.”

As Marists, we are called to live these virtues and respond to St. Francis’ call to be the Marian face of the Church and witness to the world that there is a better way, a way of compassion, a way to gently love and accept all humans. A way to be a disciple of Jesus in the way of Mary. So how do we do this?

In the Marist document, *He gave us the Name Mary* by Br. Emili Turu, we read,

“With Mary, who sets out in haste, we feel called to live our lives in service and to bring Jesus to others. In this service, the most vulnerable children and young people have preference. With them and for them, together with many other persons of good will, we contribute

to making the world a better place. Our perspective for looking at the world is that of Jesus, who, as he prepares to wash the feet, looks at it from below.

Mons. Tonino Bello, poet, bishop and prophet, often used this image of the Church of the apron, because, he said, this is the only liturgical ornament we can attribute to Jesus. And he stated: The Lord 'got up from the table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist': here is the Church of the apron.

Whoever wants to draw the Church as the heart of Jesus experiences it, has to draw it with the towel around its waist....the Church of the apron is the Church Jesus prefers because he has made it so. To become servants of the world, to get down on the ground as Jesus did... and set to washing the feet of people, the world. This is the Church. And we, whose feet do we wash?"

Throughout our Marist history, we have been blessed to have had many Brothers and Lay Marists who have been great examples and witnesses of what it means to respond to the signs of the times and to embrace that image of the apron. They each had the humility to kneel before others and like Jesus be a servant of servants.

Br. Michael Green from Australia describes these three Marist virtues of Simplicity, Humility and Modesty in a way that further illustrates how we must respond to our world as a member of this Church of the apron,

“They are not behavioral guidelines but, rather, spiritual attitudes. Of course, if we nurture them in our faith lives –in the way we approach God – then they are likely to be mirrored in our ministry. That is to say, we will approach young people and our colleagues, and everyone, in the same way that we approach God: with the respect that comes from humility, with the genuineness that comes from simplicity, and with the desire to allow them to shine that comes from our modesty. We approach them with an apron, basin and towel. To love and to serve.”

Our Marist virtues of Simplicity, Humility and Modesty can be traced back to the very day of our founding on January 2, 1817. Marcellin, with those first two young recruits, lived a lifestyle that would be considered impoverished by today’s standards but yet it was through that simple and most basic daily life that our Marist Pillar of Family Spirit was born and chiseled into our being.

Those early years were harsh indeed but were somehow attractive to other young men who would soon choose to respond to Marcellin’s dream. Those early Brothers realized their humble leader was special and unlike other priests and religious leaders of their time. He rolled up his sleeves and never put himself above them but rather was willing to do any task that was needed to move the project forward. While the dream was always to educate and impact the lives of young people, especially the most neglected, any needed steps to

make that dream a reality were not afraid to be tried, including the need to make nails just so they could put some food on the table. Our early Marists embraced this life of simplicity, humility and modesty joyfully and together in that small hidden hamlet of LaValla.

Likewise, Mary lived most of her life hidden away in another small town. Her days were probably filled with many mundane tasks such as laundry, cooking, and caring for her family. Similarly, most of us live quiet, “hidden” lives. We go about our days taking care of our responsibilities and trying to live in peace with the people around us. We too, as Marists of Champagnat, embrace these calls to simply do good quietly and live as humble and modest disciples as Mary, our sister in faith did all those years ago.

But as hidden or quiet as Mary was, she played a vital role in God’s plan. Every time she acted in love, every time she witnessed to patience or mercy, every time she prayed, her words and actions taught her son and helped him grasp the special calling God had for him. Similarly, every time we pray with our families, our communities, our students, every time we choose compassion over resentment, every time we give rather than take—all of these actions influence the many people around us. They help bring Jesus’ presence into our homes, communities and schools. Every time we imitate Mary, especially when we humbly share our faith with the people around us, we change our world a little more for the better.

Through her canticle of joy and gratitude, Mary shows us that each of us, no matter how lowly, can bring Christ into the world. And as Marists of Champagnat, that simply is our mission to make Jesus Christ known and loved.

My favorite memory surrounding this theme came from a group of Marist Young Adults who built a chapel dedicated to St. Marcellin and was named, the Three Violets chapel in the summer of 2019 on Magnificat Farm in rural Kentucky. They lived very much with the same spirit as our early Marists willing to perform any needed task to help the project succeed. They worked in harsh and rugged conditions but yet their family spirit allowed them to remain joyful and productive. I look forward to returning again this summer with another group of amazing Marist volunteers to enclose the front and back of this Marist chapel with stained glass windows. Magnificat Farm is a place to which I hope many Marists will travel so they might be enriched and renewed.



Building the Three Violets Chapel 2019

“Our spirituality, Marial and apostolic, invites us to look to Mary as Jesus’ First Disciple for our response. She is for us a model of listening, of love for poor people, and of welcoming the message of God. Her way of living the Word of God inspires us and directs us along the way we should go. Like Mary, we not only magnify the Lord with our lips, but commit ourselves to serve God’s justice with our lives.”

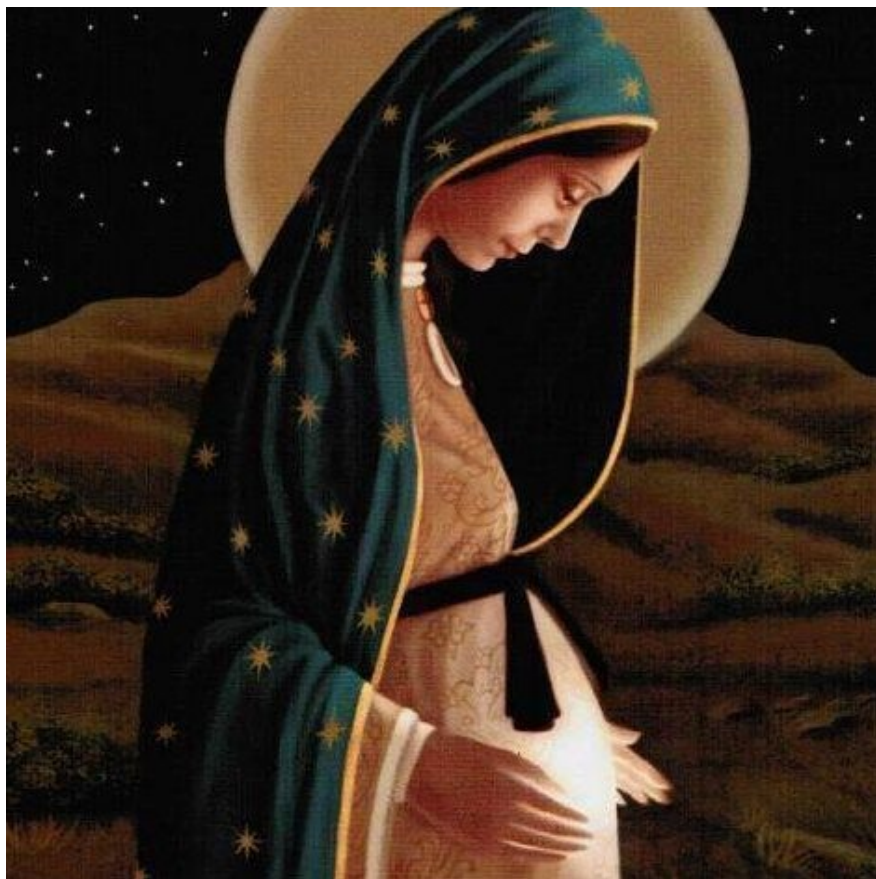
Water from the Rock (151)

Images of Mary

Mary, A Woman of Faith

Mary was the perfect disciple and faithful servant. She humbly served her God and accepted His call to miraculously bring His son into our world. One of my favorite quotes from the original version of the classic Christmas movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*, is “faith is believing in something even when common sense tells you not to.” Mary’s first reaction to the invitation by the Angel Gabriel was simply her own common sense speaking when she asked Gabriel, “How can this be since I am a virgin?” It was in the next line of that scripture passage that we see how she abandons her common sense and allows her deep and remarkable faith to believe in the miracle that will soon begin to grow within her very womb.

What areas of our lives do we need to surrender to God and trust that in Him all things are possible?



A Faithful Mary

Mary, A Woman of Prayer

Many years ago one of my great Marist mentors, Br. Steve Urban, once described prayer to me as the ability to allow Jesus to enter our lives in such a way that His presence transforms our being and actions into becoming a vessel of God's grace. I believe Mary embodied that description of prayer. From the moment Mary surrenders to God's will and throughout the remainder of her life, she carried Jesus first in her womb, then in her arms and always in her heart. By her "Fiat", she became the most incredible witness of what it means to be a vessel of God's grace. She was a woman of deep faith who prayed and "pondered many things in her heart." Her words to the Angel Gabriel are in themselves simple but also a profound witness of true prayer which allowed her to be open to respond to God's unique call in her life. Her canticle at the Visitation again demonstrates the depth of her prayer life and her understanding of her Jewish heritage. In that song, she weaves together many phrases taken from ancient Israel and joyfully and boldly proclaims them and makes them her own.

Mary is mentioned a total of only nineteen times in the entire new testament and in only four gospel passages is she quoted, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Finding of Jesus in the Temple and at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Each of these passages are invitations for us to reflect on so that we might embrace her spirit and live our

Marist lives more in the way of Mary. Let us in our own time pray with these stories and allow her words to become our own.



A Prayerful Mary

Mary, A Woman of Action

As we mentioned above, Mary pondered many things in her heart. She was a person of great contemplation. If we are also people of contemplation, then our ponderings must likewise lead us to action. It must lead us to openness; openness to listening to God, openness to surrendering to God, openness to respond as Mary did by saying, “let it be done to me according to your will.”

This attitude of contemplation in our life comes from our feelings of compassion, of love and of a deep desire to put God into the center of our lives as we see the world and choose how we may respond to its many needs. We must be willing as Marists of Champagnat to listen to God whispering to us in our hearts during our prayer time as well as listening to the signs of our times and the needs of our world and those we know in it.

As Br. Emili Turú, our former Superior General wrote:-

“Mary in the Annunciation is our model of openness to the Spirit, to whom she listens attentively in silence and to whose action she abandons herself. Like her, who treasured these things and pondered them in her heart, we seek to be contemplatives in action.”

Marcellin like Mary was a person of action and always looked for practical ways to solve the problems of his time. In the days ahead,

let us examine our lives and see what actions we might be called to make that would be reflective of how Champagnat or Mary might respond.



Mary, a woman who went in haste to help another

Mary, A Woman of Solidarity

Mary can certainly identify with many of the those in our world who suffer the harshest and most difficult of realities. A few examples of those that Mary would be in solidarity with include:

- The refugees and migrants in our world.

This world crisis continues to rapidly grow out of control. Half of all today's refugees are children. Let us not forget that Mary and Joseph were also refugees and had to flee from Bethlehem and travel to Egypt to avoid Jesus' being slaughtered as a result of King Herod's decree to have all the male children in Bethlehem under two years of age killed. It was Herod's attempt to ensure that the future Messiah would not come to live out His destiny for fear that Herod's own power and authority might be in danger. This dramatic episode is part of the annual Gospel reading for the "Feast of the Holy Innocents," celebrated on December 28th.



Image by Br. Todd Patenaude

The Holy Family separated at the Border Wall in El Paso, TX

- The many young girls who become pregnant as teenagers.

Sadly, today millions of babies are aborted out of fear and desperation. These young girls often do not have the support of a loving family or are in an abusive relationship. Let us pray that young girls in this situation might find an Elizabeth in their life who might help them find a way to choose life for their unborn child. Too many unborn children are added to the growing list of a modern version of “Holy Innocents.”



Mary as a Teenage Mother

- Mary was the mother of an innocent executed prisoner.

The death penalty still rages in many parts of our country and world. Each year too many continue to be executed and some of those that are killed truly, like Christ, are innocent. I recommend the recent film, *Just Mercy*, to anyone who wishes to reflect more on this issue. Every

executed soul is the child of a grieving mother whose pain and heartbreak Mary shares and knows. Let us pray for a more humane way to allow justice to be served for all criminals in our world.



Mary, Our Good Mother

Marcellin had a very deep devotion to Mary. During the time period in which he grew up, that area of France greatly looked to Mary as its Patroness. This local Marial influence was not wasted on the Champagnat family. When a young Marcellin was discerning whether to enter the seminary and become a priest, his mother brought him on a pilgrimage to the Marial sanctuary at La Louvesc, so that he could pray to Mary for the wisdom and guidance he needed as he looked to his future. While in the seminary, his closest friends were a group of seminarians, who likewise each had a great devotion to Mary and would eventually join him in creating the various branches of the Society of Mary.

This intimate relationship that Marcellin had with Mary defined our spirituality as Marists. In our tradition, the phrase “Ordinary Resource” has come to encapsulate our constant reliance on Mary. The famous Marist motto, “All to Jesus through Mary, all to Mary for Jesus”, has been attributed to have been passed down to the early Brothers from Champagnat himself.

Marcellin went to Mary with any and all of his needs and had a steadfast belief that she would answer his prayers. He entrusted his *Little Brothers of Mary* to her protection and often spoke about how their work was really her project. Some of the more famous instances

that illustrate his great belief in her protection of our Marist mission include his turning to her during the vocation crisis of 1822, his and Brother Stanislaus' Memorare in the snow, and his belief that it was Mary who saved the Brothers in the Revolution of 1830 when French authorities searched the novitiate. He knew that her project would not fail and often said, "Without Mary we are nothing and with Mary we have everything."

One of the prayers that he once wrote for Br. François illuminates his concept of Mary as Our Good Mother.

"Mary, My good Mother, I am called here to do good: I can achieve nothing without the assistance of your divine son, and yours as well. This is why I ask you to help me. I ask you to be with me, directing my hands, my words, my heart, my whole person. And when I am faced with some difficulties, Good Mother, I will entrust them to you though I myself will do all that depends on me. I offer and commend to you, all that will be entrusted to me. Amen." – St. Marcellin Champagnat



Mary, Our Good Mother

Final Thoughts

A few weeks ago, I was elected to my newest assignment as Provincial of the Marist Brothers USA Province. I am humbled and honored to serve all our Marists of Champagnat and look forward to working with amazing Brothers, Lay Marists, Marist Young Adults and our Marist Youth in continuing to grow our Marist Mission of Making Jesus Known and Loved.

As we move into the future, I pray that all in our Marist World will embody the spirit of Mary so that we might truly respond to the many needs of our world in a gentle, loving and humble way. We have each been uniquely called as Marists to be the living face of a Marian Church.

Our Marist mission has expanded into eight-two countries around our world because of the Marist virtues lived by Champagnat and our early Brothers. They lived our virtues of humility, modesty and simplicity in a way that has easily transcended many generations of Marists around our globe. Those first Marists carved into all our hearts a desire to promote family spirit, a love of hard work, a willingness to walk in the way of Mary and a dedication to being truly present to all those in our life and work. Our continued simple ways of living and promoting the gospel today will ensure that

Champagnat's dream and our Marist charism will continue to be absorbed and integrated into the lives of our Marists of the future.

May Jesus, Mary and Marcellin continue to be our inspiration in all things. As God continues to call each of us in ways great and small to be his hands and feet and put on our Marists aprons, may our response always be the same as Mary's, "Let it be done to me according to your will."

Your Brother,

Dan

Appendix I

Marial Feast Days and Celebrations

- **January 1:** Mary, the Holy Mother of God
- **Sunday after Christmas:** Feast of the Holy Family
- **February 2:** Presentation of the Lord
- **February 11:** Our Lady of Lourdes
- **March 25:** Feast of the Annunciation
- **May 13:** Our Lady of Fatima
- **May 31:** The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- **Monday after Pentecost:** The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
- **June 27:** Our Mother of Perpetual Help
- **July 16:** Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- **August 5:** Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major
- **9 days after Corpus Christi:** The Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| • August 15: | The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| • August 21: | Our Lady of Knock |
| • August 22: | The Queenship of Mary |
| • September 8: | The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| • September 12: | The Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| • September 15: | Our Lady of Sorrows |
| • October 7: | Our Lady of the Rosary |
| • November 21: | The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary |
| • December 8: | The Feast of the Immaculate Conception |
| • December 10: | Our Lady of Loreto |
| • December 12: | Our Lady of Guadalupe |

Our Church devotes the month of May to Mary and the month of October to the Rosary. Saturdays are also traditionally reserved as special days to remember Mary in prayer. For many years our Marist Communities would pray the Office of The Blessed Virgin Mary every Saturday and on all Marial feast days.

Appendix II

Titles of Mary

The list below is by no means all inclusive, but a good starting point for discovering some of the official titles bestowed on Mary. I invite you to discover more about a number of these titles by reading some of the reflections shared during last Advent by a number of our USA Marists. Special thanks to Mr. Matt Fallon for compiling those reflections into the following resource:

<https://www.maristyouth.com/advent>

Immaculate Conception

Mary of Nazareth

Mary, Handmaid of the Lord

Mary, Refuge of Sinners

Mary, Untier of Knots

Medjugorje/Mother of the Redeemer

Morning Star

Mother of Divine Grace

Mother of Mercy

Mother of Wisdom

Our Good Mother

Our Lady of Charity or Nuestra Señora de la Caridad Del Cobre.
Patroness of Cuba.

Our Lady of Czestochowa, patroness of Poland

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Hungary

Our Lady of Knock, Queen of Ireland

Our Lady of La Salette

Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady of Fatima

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Our Lady of Olives

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Our Lady of Sorrows

Our Lady of the Lost and Found

Our Lady Queen of Angels

Queen of Families

Queen of Martyrs

Queen of Peace

Soloce of Migrants

Star of the Sea

Theotokos

Appendix III

Praying with Mary

Listed below are a number of Marial Prayer resources that may be helpful for your reflections and prayers.

The Magnificat

Use Mary's Magnificat as a prayer resource. Pray with her words and make them your own.

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the
Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
for he has looked with favor on his lowly
servant.

From this day all generations will call me
blessed: the Almighty has done great
things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their
thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant
Israel for he has remembered his promise
of mercy, the promise he made to our
fathers, to Abraham and his children
forever.”

Some examples of how to use Mary’s Song might be:-

- How has your soul magnified the Lord?
- How has your Spirit rejoiced in God, your savior?
- How has God looked on you with Favor?
- What mighty things has he done for you this year, this week, today?

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
that never was it known
that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored thy help, or sought your intercession
was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my mother,
to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.

Many Marists around our country pause every day at noon to recite this same prayer that was so often prayed by Marcellin and generations of Marists.

The Rosary

The repetition in the rosary is meant to lead one into restful and contemplative prayer related to each mystery. The gentle repetition of the words helps us to enter into the silence of our hearts, where Christ's spirit dwells. The rosary can be said privately or with a group.

The mysteries of the rosary that can be prayed are listed below. Each of the mysteries allows one to focus each of the five decades

of that rosary on five different events from the lives of Jesus or Mary:-

1. The Joyful Mysteries

- a. The Annunciation
- b. The Visitation
- c. The Nativity
- d. The Presentation in the Temple
- e. The Finding in the Temple

2. The Glorious Mysteries

- a. The Resurrection
- b. The Ascension
- c. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
- d. The Assumption
- e. The Coronation of Mary

3. The Sorrowful Mysteries

- a. The Agony in the Garden
- b. The Scourging at the Pillar
- c. The Crowning with Thorns
- d. The Carrying of the Cross
- e. The Crucifixion and Death

4. **Luminous Mysteries**

- a. The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan
- b. The Wedding Feast at Cana
- c. Jesus' Proclamation of the Coming of the Kingdom of God
- d. The Transfiguration
- e. The Institution of the Eucharist

How to Pray the Rosary

1. Begin by making the sign of the cross
2. Holding the crucifix of the rosary recite the apostles' creed.
3. Recite an Our Father on the first bead
4. Recite three Hail Marys on the next three beads
5. Recite a Glory Be...on the next bead
6. For each of the next five decades announce the mystery that will be prayed and use the beads to pray one Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be.
7. After finishing each decade, many say the following prayer requested by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima: *O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.*
8. After saying the five decades, say the *Hail, Holy Queen*, followed by this dialogue and prayer:

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: O God, whose Only Begotten Son, by his life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



**A Beach Rosary created by Jane Ann Carvalho, a NJ Lay
Marist**

Salve Regina

Salve Regina mater miseri cordiae,
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra salve
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Hevae
Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle
Eia ergo advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte
Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris
tui nobis post hoc exilium ostende
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis virgo Maria

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve:
to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning
and weeping in this vale of tears.
Turn then, most gracious Advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus,
O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.

Immaculate Mary

Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing.

You reign now in Heaven with Jesus our King.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

In Heaven the blessed your glory proclaim; On earth we your
children invoke your sweet name.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

We pray for our Mother, the Church upon earth,

And bless, Holy Mary, the land of our birth.

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!

A Marist Morning Offering

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, sufferings of this day, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the success of our Marist mission throughout the world and all our Brothers and Lay Marists that bring our Mission to life on a daily basis. I offer them for the intentions of our wider Church and of all members of the Apostleship of Prayer, and in particular for the intentions of our Global Marist Family.

Novenas

Special prayers known as novenas have often been used throughout history to pray for a special intention or need. Many novenas last for a period of nine days and those making the novena will pray the words of that particular novena on each of those nine days. The following three Hail Mary Novena is a simple example of a novena that was made famous by than St. Anthony of Padua:

One

Oh, Immaculate Mary, Virgin most powerful, I beseech thee, through that immense power which thou hast received from the Eternal Father, obtain for me purity of heart, strength to overcome all the enemies of my soul, and the special favor I implore in my present necessity.

[Name your request]

Mother most pure! Forsake me not, despise not my prayer, graciously hear me for God's glory, thy honor, and the welfare of my soul.

To obtain this favor I honor thy power by reciting:

Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

Two

Oh Virgin Mary, my Mother, through that ineffable wisdom bestowed upon thee by the Incarnate Word of God, I humbly beseech thee, obtain for me meekness and humility of heart, a perfect knowledge of the Divine Will, and strength to accomplish it always.

Oh Mary, Seat of Wisdom; as a tender Mother lead me in the path of Christian virtue and perfection; enlighten and enable me to do what is most pleasing to thy beloved Son, and obtain my petition.

To obtain this grace I honor thy wisdom by reciting:

Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

Three

Oh, Mother of Mercy, Mother of penitent sinners, I stand before thee sinful and sorrowful, beseeching thee through the immense Love given to thee by the Holy Spirit for us poor sinners, obtain for me true and perfect contrition for my sins, which I hate and detest with all my heart, because I love God.

Mother most merciful, help me in my present necessity. Turn, then those eyes of mercy toward us, oh clement, oh loving, oh sweet Virgin Mary!

To obtain this precious gift, I honor thy loving mercy by reciting:

Hail Mary, full of grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Amen.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven,

Have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world:

Have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Ghost,

Have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, One God,

Have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us. (repeat at end of each phrase.)

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Mother most pure,
Mother most chaste,
Mother inviolate,
Mother undefiled,
Mother most amiable,
Mother most admirable,
Mother of good counsel,
Mother of our Creator,
Mother of our Savior,
Virgin most prudent,
Virgin most venerable,
Virgin most renowned,
Virgin most powerful,
Virgin most merciful,
Virgin most faithful,
Mirror of justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Spiritual vessel,
Vessel of honor,
Singular vessel of devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of ivory,

House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of Heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Queen conceived without original sin,
Queen assumed into heaven,
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of peace.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Grant, O Lord God, we beseech Thee, that we Thy servants may rejoice in continual health of mind and body; and, through the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, may be freed from present sorrow, and enjoy eternal gladness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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To learn more about the Marist Brothers and our Marist Mission

www.maristbr.com

www.champagnat.org

<http://maristbrotherscenter.org>



About the Author

Br. Dan O'Riordan, FMS, a Marist Brother, and currently Provincial for the USA Province shares reflections on Mary, our Good Mother and her role in the life of all Marists of Champagnat, in this his third book. He graduated from Archbishop Molloy High School in New York, University College Cork, Ireland and earned an MA at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY.

He has served as a teacher, coach, counselor and campus minister at numerous Marist High Schools around the USA. He also served his Province as their Vocation Director and Vice Provincial.

He has coordinated more than one hundred mission service trips allowing many young people the opportunity to serve the least favored in many communities. He has also led numerous pilgrimages for young people and continues to be a featured speaker on youth retreats and youth gatherings, where he

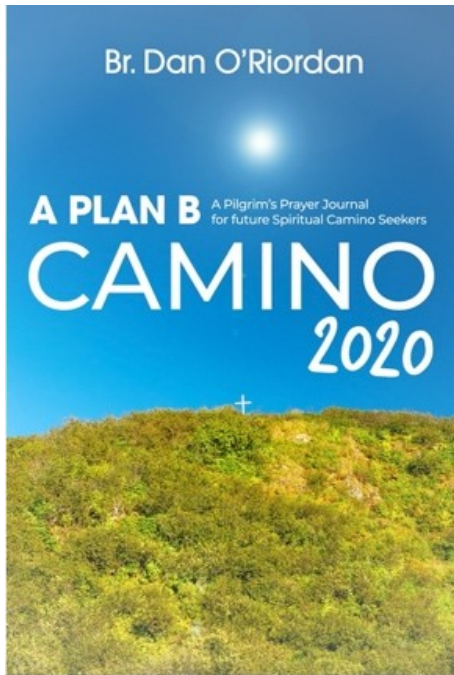
encourages young people to find ways to answer God's call and use their gifts and talents in responding to the many needs of our world.

Br. Dan has many passions in life including spirituality, writing, painting, running, hiking, hurling, golf, Yankees baseball and most of all spending quality time with his Brothers and Lay Marists, his own family, his friends and his many Godchildren.

Other Books by Br. Dan O'Riordan



Never too Young to Change the World



**A Plan B Camino 2020: A Pilgrim's Prayer Journal for future
Spiritual Camino Seekers.**

Both books are available in paperback or kindle edition on Amazon.com. All Proceeds from the sale of these books will be utilized to support the mission and programs at the Marist Brothers Center in Esopus.

More information on brdanbooks.com