

5: TO LISTEN CAREFULLY

Many of the people calling are so frustrated and disappointed by other people, and by life itself in a sense, that the first thing they do is to complain and lament, or even verbally attack the volunteer on the phone. The skill is not to withdraw offended or angry because of that. As Marists we might say: a Marist skill!

What is most important is to accept each individual as a person, to listen carefully and with empathy and to stay with the person in his or her actual need. Important, too, is to have common sense and to be realistic. I do not need to define this as a 'Marist' approach but I am sure it goes with our Marist spirit.

CONSTITUTION 136: The Society of Mary is constituted in the Church as an apostolic religious community. The phrase 'unknown and even hidden in this world' indicates the manner in which Marists engage in the apostolate and it does not hinder them from doing great things for God. It leads Marists to place themselves in the situation of those to whom they are sent and to put aside everything in themselves which might be an obstacle to the working of the Spirit.

6: JUSTICE AND DIGNITY

I was in solidarity with the defence of the rights of workers and concerned by respect for human dignity. This dignity was often confronted by a liberal ideology which harms the human person because the only worth of the person is profitability and the quest for profit. My involvement with the trade union had no other aim than to safeguard the basic rights of workers and to raise awareness of the responsibility of each person. By working on production lines, I created links of empathy which opened up into dialogue and trust. Work colleagues opened their hearts and shared with me about their family life and the difficulties they encountered. How important listening seemed to me! ...

Instead of us turning in upon ourselves, would we not have the courage to propose to young people to come and see how we live and to share time with us! Can we offer the "taste of God", of Mary and of the fraternal life? This is the question that occupies me.

CONSTITUTION 111: They should be attentive to the cry of the poor which makes an urgent and continuous appeal for a conversion of minds and attitudes. They acknowledge that action for justice is an integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel and they strive, therefore, to remedy injustices in economic and social relationships.

REFLECTIONS FOR LENT 2015

These are quotes from some of the narratives written by Marists involved in solidarity ministry as a response to the Solidarity Ministry Narrative project. They are accompanied by references to the Constitutions. The Solidarity committee offers them to you for prayer and reflection during Lent.

1: HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL COMFORT

It has been and will continue to be, meeting people who are blind which will mark my life. They have communicated to me their joy of living and their belief beyond their difficulties. It is a humbling ministry to these people who sometimes have an extraordinary faith. It is also the opportunity to meet young people who put themselves generously at the service of others...

This ministry fits very well within the "hidden and unknown" category which animated the life of Fr Colin. This presence with them is always for me a source of human and spiritual comfort. I try to put into practice the words of the Gospel: "whatever you did to one of these little ones, you did it to me".



CONSTITUTION 24: The spirit of 'hidden and unknown' leads Marists to embrace a life of simplicity, modesty and humility. Nothing in their personal life or behaviour, neither pride nor personal ambition, must cause people to resist the salvation offered them by God. Like Mary they are to be gentle with others, respectful of their freedom, and sensitive to their point of view. In this spirit they are able to hear the longings of the people of God and discern the signs of hope present in today's world.

2: REVOLUTION OF TENDERNESS

Jesus was born on the margins of society and he proposes to us the revolution of tenderness so that, with hope and joy, we announce to people, the God of Mercy. This is our contribution to the humanisation of society.

Mary encourages me to be present with her, and in the particular manner she was present in Nazareth, in Bethlehem, in Cana, at the foot of the Cross, in the Upper Room, at Pentecost, in the early Church and at the end of time.



CONSTITUTION 8: Because they bear the name of Mary, Marists desire to be like her and follow Jesus as she did. Contemplating Mary in the mysteries of Nazareth and Pentecost and her role at the end of time, they come to share her zeal for her Son's mission in his struggle against evil, and to respond with promptness to the most urgent needs of God's people.

3: BE POOR AND BE HAPPY TO BE POOR



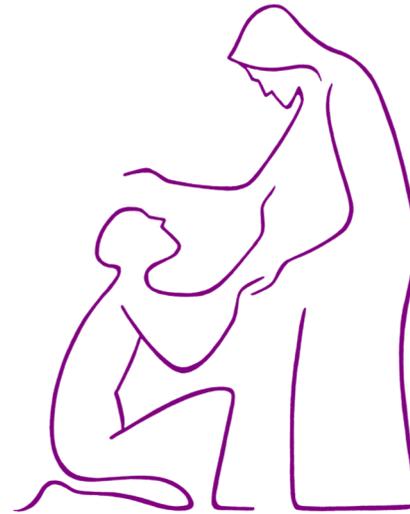
The God of Mercy is present in a thousand ways and sometimes surprises us... there is no lack of situations in which he makes himself present and we have to make the most of them.

Every day I have to ask myself the question whether it is sufficient for me to be in solidarity with the poor or if I have go a little further and also be poor and be happy to be poor as Mary was.

To help to overcome the ambiguities and to live positively the contradictions in this field, there are those encounters, sometimes unexpected, with people who touch our hidden sensitivity and discover unknown riches and which give a new direction to life, or a change, or inspiration to see it in a different way.

CONSTITUTION 92: Marists are called, above all, to make their own a Marian vision of the Church. To achieve this, nothing will be as effective as a re-living of the founding experience of the Society. Like the twelve young men at Fourviere they respond to a special call. By 'tasting God' as Father Colin did at Cerdon, they realise the radical opposition between the spirit of Mary and the spirit of ambition, covetousness, and the lust for power. Like the first missionaries in Bugey they proclaim the Good News of God's mercy to those most in need. Thus in continuity with the experience of the first Marists, the Society of Mary, generation by generation, becomes a reality in the world and its members know the joy that comes from a whole-hearted response to their vocation.

4: TO BECOMING MORE HUMAN



Dealing with people who suffer is always a great help to becoming more human and to become more sensitive, more compassionate and welcoming, like Mary, the woman welcoming and full of attentiveness towards those people who are needy.

Many people dedicate part of their time as volunteers in hospitals, prisons, caring for "homeless" people. If they do it with their sense of availability, joy and service of others, they ease the pain of those who suffer, why should I not do it too?

CONSTITUTION 97: Following the Lord's command to love his neighbour as himself, the Marist manifests to others that same compassionate love with which he himself is loved by God. In loving all those whom God has given him - his confreres, his family and friends, and those to whom he has been sent to preach the Gospel - his chief concern must be their good. A life so lived will bring the joy which comes from an inti-mate relationship with God and from loving one's brothers and sisters.