

## *Life from within*

*Life from within.* The spiritual force of Marist life is a power which bursts out, but it comes from a point of stillness. Its end point is zealous activity for the Kingdom, but it finds its source in a deep interior life. This is why the two symbolic moments of Mary's life, at Nazareth and in the Church as it came to birth, can serve as powerful beacons for Marists. Colin easily moved from one of these mysteries to the other in his conversations, sometimes speaking of both of them in the same breath, contrasting one with the other; and sometimes merging the two as different currents in the same stream. For him, the important thing was not to look at these two mysteries as if they were separate events whose meaning needed to be analysed. The key point for him was to keep looking at the person of Mary, who found a home both at Nazareth and in the early Church. Mary's heart pondered the Word in silence, and received the Spirit in power. She who is Mystical Rose is also Queen of Apostles; she who is hidden and unknown is also Queen of Martyrs; she who was the woman who pondered the Word in her heart was also the woman on mission, her heart on fire with the Spirit; she who gathered the apostles and believers who lived as "one in mind and heart" also consoled and even sent the apostles out on mission.

*Life from within.* The secret of the power in Mary, the secret of the energy in any saint, is life from within. The Holy Spirit is within each baptised person, and any Christian's spiritual journey will be inwards to experience the Spirit within, and outwards to recognise the Spirit at work in the world. The way Colin sees these two Marian moments of Nazareth and the Pentecost Church then is extremely enriching, because in Mary the two moments took place together. In Mary, a Pentecost had already taken place at Nazareth when the Holy Spirit came down on her at the Annunciation. In Mary, the still life of Nazareth was being lived in the Pentecost life of the early Church.

*Life from within.* On one occasion Jean-Claude Colin used a telling image to describe the life of prayer. He said: "Piety is like water set over the fire. It has various levels of heat. First of all it is tepid, then warm, then boiling, then so hot that it is as if it were transformed into spirit. It exists as steam, but steam that is burning hot, and very strong, rising and warming everything about it... When completely changed to steam the water seems to make no noise, to be completely still, but it burns, it is strong. That is how we must be."

September, 1854

Father Colin said,

*"We must hold fast to the spirit which presided over the birth of the Society. Enquire further and further into it every day: you will only be good Marists in so far as you really put it into practice. And what is this spirit? It is the spirit of the Blessed Virgin, a spirit of modesty, of humility, of prudence, of simplicity, of discretion.... In all things let us look to Mary, let us imitate her life at Nazareth. She did more than the apostles for the new-born Church: she is the Queen of Apostles, but she did it without any stir, she did it above all by her prayers.... Let us therefore unite silence and prayer with action. The Society of Mary desires that we, her children, should be missionaries of action, and missionaries of prayer."*

*The Mayet Memoirs*

## *Prayer in the city*

I have a friend in Japan who is a family man with a tough job that demands a lot of overtime. He has to spend three hours daily travelling to and from work in crowded trains. He has learned to pray part of this time even though he is hanging on to an overhead strap. He usually finds the door to his "private room" in the train by opening his New Testament. Since he began doing this he has found he can "centre" his day and find meaning in the drudgery. He had tuberculosis very badly after the war, and was always down with colds every winter. Now, he says, this condition has improved remarkably. Many doctors wouldn't find that remarkable, probably, because they keep telling us that over 50% of sickness comes from our inner dispositions. If you think it's impossible to concentrate peacefully in a crowded, lurching train, watch a young mother in one with her new baby. And how few young mothers get sick despite their shocking hours!

*Paul Glynn, sm*





## *Infinite space*

When Karl Rahner sj wrote the following he was writing especially for priests who were caught up in a life of action and were trying to ensure that the flame of prayer was not extinguished. But with the appropriate adaptation, his words speak to any Christian:

"In Mary, act and spirituality are one. In her, interior life has no need to fear that it will be profaned and die when it issues forth in the external work of conceiving a child, serving him as a mother, submitting to a life of drudgery, enduring an oppressive political situation, walking the way of the Cross to its end. The Spirit that was imparted to her penetrates into this work. She obtains it by losing herself in sheer, self-giving service of this work. Mary is so given over to God that she can find him in everything: experience, prayer, action, suffering. She is active in contemplation, and contemplative in action. She can be both in one, because of her willingness to be always entirely at her master's service, because she never seeks herself....

"When we look at Mary, we have no need to fear that we shall lose our souls if we allow ourselves to be consumed by our work. Of course we shall defer to Christian prudence and apportion our energies rationally. Of course only that which has been undergone by us, won in prayer and personally believed can ever really be preached. But if a man is unselfish in service, humble in perseverance, compassionate, never disillusioned by all the disillusionments of his work, never bitter and skeptical, always ready to be used to the utmost, silently and continuously consuming himself in the work of his office, not seeking himself, but truly seeking others for their own sake, then he need not fear that he is interiorly inadequate; the action of his apostolate creates an infinite space within him, a heart in which God establishes himself. Such a man will indeed have to keep rekindling in himself, by prayer and silence, that inner fire which alone can give rise to such work.

"But he will also find that in a heart grown empty in the selfless service of others, the interior life comes as it were of itself. He will find, with Mary, that the Child is nearest when he is no longer carried under one's heart, but has been born into the world and has seemingly gone far off into the darkness of the Cross, leaving one with nothing but emptiness, night, and a sense of failure."

*Mary, submitting to God's word, consecrated herself fully to Him, in order to serve her Son, and further his mission. By her consent she gave Christ to the world and became the perfect model of all spiritual fruitfulness.*

*Marist Sisters' Constitutions n.17*