**Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace
is the theme of the 50th World Day of Peace…**

**So how, as Marists, can we honour this day, 1st January 2017,
the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God?**

Contemplate the image of Our Lady of Silence.

Allow Mary to draw you into the silence
and - in that silence - reflect on Pope Francis’ Message.

First and foremost, Pope Francis offers heartfelt wishes of peace to every man, woman and child and asks us to acknowledge one another as ‘sacred gifts’ endowed with the dignity that comes from being created in God’s image and likeness. In order to respect that dignity he calls us to ***make nonviolence*** ***our way of life.*** We are asked to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values –
that is our starting point! Then charity and nonviolence can begin to govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life.

In Section 1 Pope Francis says: *When victims of violence are able to resist the temptation to retaliate, they become the most credible promoters of nonviolent peace making* … and he goes on to ask that nonviolence become *the* ***hallmark*** *of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms.”*

Ponder the word ‘hallmark’, the stamp etched into
articles of gold and silver, certifying their standard of purity.
… our hallmark is Jesus Christ, liberator and peace-maker.

In Section 2 – *A Broken World* – comes the reference to *a horrifying world war fought piecemeal* and the question: *Can violence achieve any goal of lasting value? Or does it merely lead to retaliation and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit the few “warlords”?* Violence is linked with forced migration, misuse of resources, enormous suffering, trafficking, crime, and destruction of our common home.

Section 3 brings the Good News! Jesus turns the violence around and walks the path of nonviolence… right to the cross. He meets violence with love and goodness.

Sit with one of the following scripture passages:

The woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)

Put away your sword, Peter (Matthew 26:52)

Love your enemies (Matthew 5:44)

Section 4 gives us the examples of Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Martin Luther King, Leymah Gbowee and the many Liberian women who organised pray-ins and nonviolent protest and ended civil war in Liberia. Prayer and courageous action, and the weapons of truth and justice lead to a more lasting and just peace.

Section 5 situates us in the family, where, Pope Francis says, it is fundamental that nonviolence be first practised. For this is where we learn to:

*communicate and to show generous concern for one another, and in which frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved, not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness. From within families the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the whole of society.*

Section 6 is:

* an invitation to all Christians, political and religious leaders, heads of international institutions and to the business and media sector to use the wonderful peace manual Jesus gave us in the Beatitudes *(Matthew 5:3-10),*
* an invitation to choose friendship and solidarity… *to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process* … a process that preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.

Along with the invitation comes Pope Francis’ pledge that the Church will assist in every effort to build peace through ***active and creative nonviolence.***

This message for January 1st 2017 was signed
on 8th December 2016,
the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Mary surrounds all peace-making efforts…
for she is Queen of Peace.

Be drawn, once again, into the silence of Our Lady of the Silence…

* Pray for peace of heart and mind… peace in your words and actions
* Ask yourself: Do I recognise the rights and dignity of every person?
* Pray for the grace and love you might need.

Allow this to flow into action – personally and communally:

* Advocate for policies that build peace at home and around the world
* Choose a community action to promote nonviolence this year.