



MARIST VOCATION YEAR

3

To go to Nazareth.

We do not need planes or trains. God is hidden in the space we live in. As Marists we invite you to come and to be silent and to place yourself in God's presence. God is calling. God will speak to your heart, your qualities, your gifts, your talents.

Nazareth.

That is a space. It is the house – your house. It is the village or town – your village or town. During February, look at your house and town as a Loreto. Different Marist houses were called Loreto. To live the spiritual meaning of Nazareth in our day: live with the mystery in the midst of your life as Mary and Joseph did.

Alois Greiler, s.m.

ENTER THE SACRED SPACE: Nazareth and Marist Spirituality

Have you been to Nazareth? Father Colin invites us to go there. However, he is not thinking of actual travel and visit, not even a pilgrimage. Colin sees Nazareth as a spiritual anchor for Marist spirituality.

In fact, Colin's furthest away foreign travel took him to – Nazareth, the house of the Holy Family in Loreto near Ancona, Italy. In 1833 he went there on purpose, together with Fathers Bourdin and Chanel. The latter had to return to Belley for school but Colin stayed longer for a personal retreat. It meant so much to him to stay and pray in the space at the time believed to be the house of the Holy Family.

Nazareth in the thinking of Father Colin is a rich theme with a certain development and is studied by many Marists. This development reflects a growing maturity in Colin's life and a shift in emphasis for the Marist spirit. In younger years drawn to a life in solitude and prayer, Colin learnt to understand that his vocation is to be a founder of an active congregation and so to assist others on their spiritual journey. From 'Nazareth' as a contemplative branch or at least houses of retreat, Colin finally invited all Marists to find the balance of prayer and action, contemplation and mission within their own lives.

My little contribution is not a summary of all that but a reflection which may or may not help to do what Colin recommended and to discover why he did so: Place yourself spiritually in Nazareth and from there you will know what to do.

With Pope Paul VI I want to say: Let us go to the School of Nazareth and learn from the original source. For him, Mary is the teacher. Pope John Paul II highlighted Saint Joseph – Guardian of the Redeemer, guardian of the mystery. Pope Francis also focuses on Saint Joseph – with the heart of a father. Like Colin, they also invite us to begin at the beginning.

Already in his 1842 Constitutions Colin writes, as it once was in Nazareth, so let it be in the Society of Mary today: Jesus is in our midst. We are called to see God's presence, to guard it and to share it like Mary and Joseph did and in the way they did – the Marist way.

To guard the mystery.

Coste wrote about Colin's understanding of hidden and unknown and applied it to a modern world – where God often is hidden and unknown. As Marists, we guard this mystery of God's hidden presence. In silence and adoration we kneel before this mystery and draw our vocation from it and encourage others to go to 'Nazareth'.

To share the mystery.

Colin asks us not to be a hindrance for others to become aware of the hidden God in their life and in this world but a help. There is the unobtrusive manner of the Marist way of doing things. Like Mary, at the same time discrete and full of zeal: The aim of the Society is to imitate the blessed Virgin, who was at once so unassuming and so full of zeal for the salvation of the world, working for it in silence. (A Founder Speaks, doc. 1, November 1837)