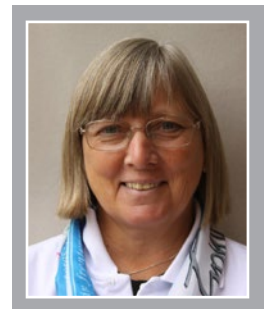

To Bring a Marian Face

“Living the Marist charism from the perspective of women (feminine) invites us all to adopt in our lives the Marian elements, such as tenacity, stamina, maternal affection, tenderness, attention to detail and intuition in our daily experience.”

(Gathered Around the Same Table.25)

Maureen Hagan

Director of the Lay Marist Council
Province of United States of America



My Marist journey began in earnest when I served as Campus Minister at Roselle Catholic High School in New Jersey, from 2001-2016. After that, I became the Director of Adult Formation for the USA province. During this time, the movement toward acknowledging and formalizing the lay vocation started to take shape. I was appointed, by our provincial, to work on several committees – one, to organize the first lay assembly in the United States, which took place in 2018. Next, the steering committee to organize the priorities of the assembly.

This journey reflects not only my work experience, but also my spiritual journey of recognizing my own vocation, my own call to Marcellin’s charism, as lived out by the Marists of Champagnat. In these various positions, I have been called to leadership. To me, that has meant working to bring the Marial face to our work and to help others do the same. To not just talk about this aspect, but to make it real.

Prophetic leadership in bringing this Marial face to life is critical in our world today. The world where competition, hierarchical structures, judgement, exclusion, greed and the race for power over people has done so much damage to our society and our planet.

Mary’s model calls for compassion, rather than competition. It calls for open minds, open hearts, and open arms. It calls for a love that brings in, not closes out. All qualities that are needed in our world right now.

We pray in the Salve, “mother of mercy” and call her “our life, our sweetness and our hope”.

This mercy encompasses all, is an all-inclusive love. A love that sees, and listens, a love that is able to walk in another's shoes, and thus, act with compassion and empathy. And act, hopefully, with real solutions.

I think of "sweetness" as "kindness". I don't need to be better than, I need to be kind. I don't need to propel myself forward by stepping on others. I need to be kind... and helpful. And in those gestures, perhaps, I provide hope. The young people who are attracted to our charism, in spite of feeling abandoned by their church, respond to this all-inclusive kindness and acceptance. They have hope for a better way of being church.

In my time as Campus Minister, I was privileged to work with many folks who were serving those on the margins. For several years, we conducted a homeless immersion experience for our students. On one of those occasions, I slept in my car all night, to keep an eye on the students who were sleeping the field behind the school. I thought of a young woman I had met, who had lived in her car for three months, with her two young children. My thoughts were with her all night... imagining her trying to keep her children safe and to help them FEEL safe, in spite of their circumstances. What anxiety!

Also, during this time as Campus Minister, I spent every Easter break in Wheeling West Virginia, bringing students to work on restoring homes that had been damaged by flooding. The work was often tedious and tiring, yet the students served with energy and good cheer. They inspired me daily – in their work ethic, in their forming relationships with those whom we served, in their insights each evening as we processed the day. These young people were the servant leaders, dedicated to the mission of making Jesus known and loved through their work and relationships.



They also modeled Mary's compassion, generosity and inclusion. We didn't just serve to "save" people. We became part of the community, and we shared life, over meals, in conversations while working and in prayer. We were educated to life in Appalachia, one of the poorest areas of our country, and came to understand some of the realities of living in poverty there.

I am continually inspired by the brothers of our province, especially the elders, who continue to work, well into their 80s and even 90s. Their dedication to the mission compels me to continue to do my best, in my work. Even the brothers who can no longer work still support all that is going on in our province with their prayers and their continued interest in the developments of the Marists of Champagnat. They take part on our Zoom gatherings and conduct their own prayer experiences that they share on Zoom as well.

One particular memory stick with me to this day. I was sitting in a beautiful spot at the Marist Brothers retreat house in NY, with one of the older brothers. We talked about how blessed we were to be there...and we prayed the Hail Holy Queen together. And used the last line...'that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.'

To me, prophetic leadership is to not only be worthy of, but also to BE the promise of Christ. to continue in bringing the Kingdom to life, to birth a new way of being Church in OUR time. And I pray that my actions will show that to those with whom I serve.



The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Marist Institute.

If you would like to share your ideas, reflections, or experiences about servant and prophetic leadership with the Commission as a result of these reflections, write to fms.cimm@fms.it

