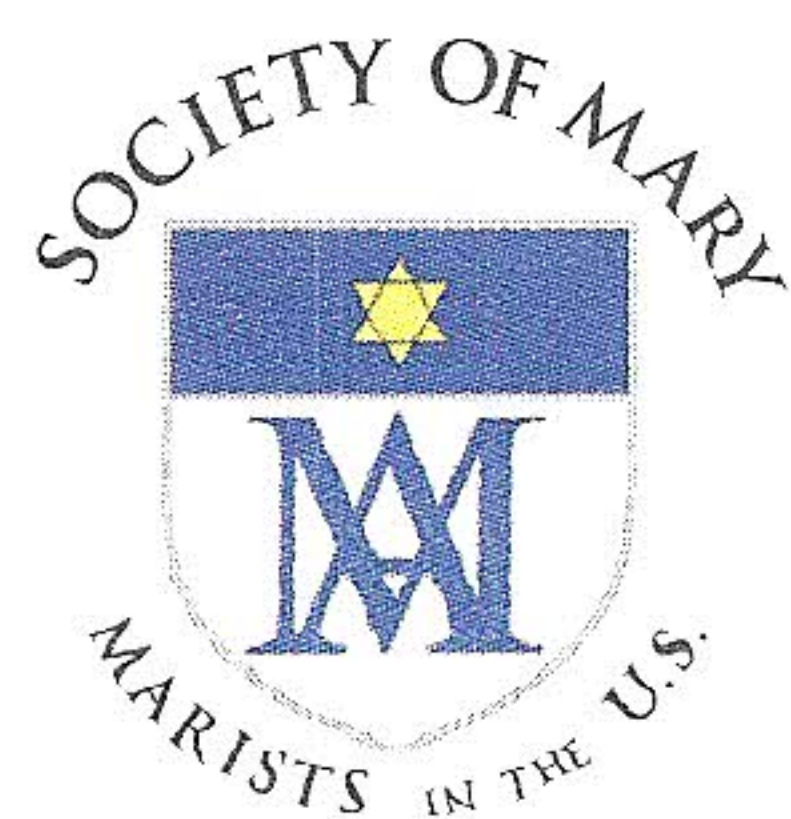


# SOCIETY OF MARY, U.S. PROVINCE



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PROVINCIAL

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August 3, 2010

Francis Cardinal George OMI  
President  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20017

Your Eminence:

As members of the Provincial Council of the US Province of the Society of Mary (The Marists), we write today to express our support for women religious with foundations in this country, particularly those who appear to be the focus of the Apostolic Visitation that is underway at the moment. We wish to write to you on the eve of their National Assembly this month.

Each of us can testify that we have benefitted personally from our association with sisters. They taught us in elementary school and during later phases of formation and education. More importantly, they encouraged our vocations. They have been our wise teachers, our thoughtful colleagues, our spiritual advisors: truly sisters in so many ways.

Our religious sisters were also among the first to take up the call to renewal that has its origin during the years prior to Vatican Council II. Responding to the challenge of Pius XII regarding formation, women religious in this country established the Sister Formation Conference. During the years immediately following many had to stand their ground against the calls of demanding pastors for more sisters for their schools to insist that the young women who had joined their ranks be given the opportunity for adequate formation and education prior to taking up their apostolic work.

The recent history of renewal has not been problem free in this country. That outcome, however, should surprise no one. Change is never easy and planned change is as disruptive as change that is not planned. Despite significant good will on the part of all, mistakes have been made by religious men and women themselves and by members of the clergy, hierarchy, and laity. But such an outcome is part of the history of any period of renewal in the history of our Church and of religious life.

This year the Smithsonian Institute, an American Museum of international renowned and one charged with responsibility as a keeper of the country's history, has sponsored a traveling exhibit that illustrates some of the many contributions that sisters have made to American history. This recognition is long overdue. For during our country's tragic civil war, sisters made up at least 20 percent of the nursing staff on both sides of the conflict, often placing themselves in harm's way to treat a wounded soldier. Their leadership in education in the United States is well known and their commitment to health care has often made them the conscience of the nation in service to the poor.



Our recent Marist General Chapters remind us who seek to walk in the footsteps of Mary, that we should be in the forefront of the promotion and advancement of women in the Church and sensitive always to our sisters in faith as we are to Mary, our Sister in Faith as Paul VI called her in *Marialis Cultus*.

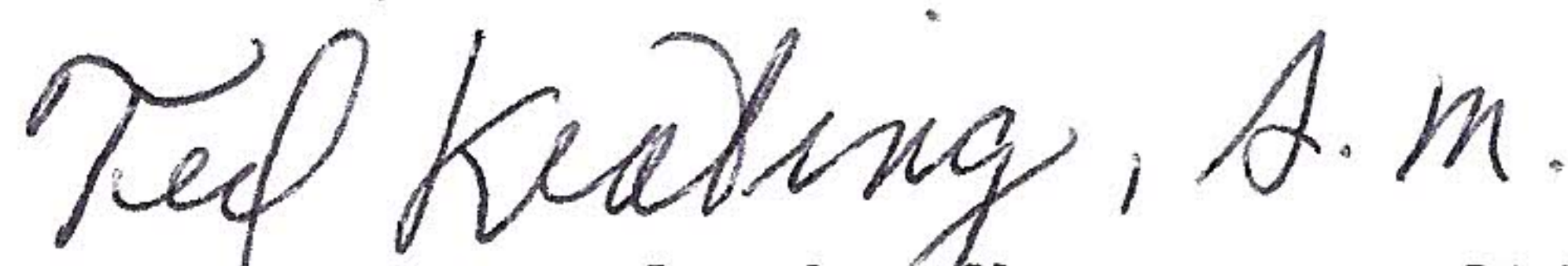
In any study of religious life that is undertaken genuine fruit will be the result only if transparency marks the process and mutual respect becomes the way in which all involved relate to one another. As part of this process, a clear and honest statement about what gave rise to the study and the identification of those calling for it to take place is assumed.

Today, women religious bear witness to the unique value of lives given totally to God in love and expressed in generous service to God's people. They also provide and have provided inestimable leadership in our Church within the United States and in overseas mission.

The Marist Fathers and Brothers of the US Province in a special way have been blessed to be associated with the Marist Sisters and the Marist Missionary Sisters. We share a common charism and continue to work together in the Lord's vineyard in many challenging situations. There is no doubt that they and all women religious continue to be a profound blessing for our Church and nation.

They have been a blessing in our lives and can be assured of our support and our prayers.

Fraternally yours,



Very Rev. Timothy (Ted) Keating, SM  
Provincial

On behalf of:

Provincial Council: John Bolduc, SM  
Joseph Hindelang, SM  
Randy Hoover, SM  
Rene Iturbe, SM  
Leon Olszamowski, SM

Provincial Treasurer: John Harhager, SM

cc: Marlene Weisenbeck FSPA, President of LCWR  
Jane Burke SSND, Executive Director of LCWR