

1 March 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In the strange configuration of the liturgical calendar this year, the month of March will be mainly taken up with the Lenten season. However, the final third of the month ushers in the Easter season.

Traditionally, Lent is a rather somber time of year. Penitential purple is the liturgical color. Flowers are gone from our worship spaces, and *Alleluias* are not used in our communal prayer. We are intent on conversion, on the interior struggle, on forgiveness and reconciliation, on returning to God with our whole hearts. This is hard work, but for believers, this is the hope of our faith.

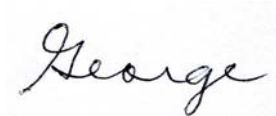
The two major feasts of this month are moved this year for liturgical reasons. The feast of St. Joseph is celebrated early, on March 15, and the Annunciation of the Lord is moved to March 31. For those looking for the memorial of St. Patrick, please note that it is not celebrated liturgically this year because it falls in Holy Week. No doubt, those among us of Irish heritage will find some way to honor their principal patron!

For the Marianist Family, St. Joseph is a significant patron. In our history, St. Joseph wielded quite a bit of influence. On March 19, 1850, Father Leo Meyer was to sign the deed for the Stuart estate. He took a little medal of St. Joseph, used it as a stamp on the seal, and then offered it to Mr. Stuart as a pledge, saying: "I have no money now, but St. Joseph will pay." Mr. Stuart smilingly accepted the medal. And, as they say, the rest is history.

I encourage you to take special care in celebrating the feast of St. Joseph this year. Through the kindness of Brother John Samaha, we have several helpful resources for your reflection and use at prayer. These resources may be accessed on the **PORTAL** (www.marianist.com/portal) under "Liturgies" and then "Various other prayers."

As we journey once again through the holiest week of our faith, may the suffering and death of Jesus lead us to wonderful Easter joy!

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George".

George J. Cerniglia, S.M.
Assistant for Religious Life

Please note: This e-mail is being sent to the following: all SMs and FMIs in the U.S.; district superiors and expatriates in the three districts; members of the GA; Province staff; and representatives of the MLNNA. If someone in your community does not have an e-mail address, please print this out for them.