



Marianist Lay Communities (MLCs) **in the Church and in the World**

“The joy and the hope, the sadness and the anguish of the modern person, above all of the poor and all afflicted classes, are also the joy and the hope, the sadness and the anguish of the disciples of Christ, and nothing that is truly human fails to resonate in his heart.”

Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes 1
Second Vatican Council

“In the bosom of Christianity, the divine torch of faith flickers and it is extinguished, virtue recedes while becoming smaller every day, and vice grows with a frightful rage. It could be said that we are currently living in the foretold time of widespread defection and an almost universal apostasy. Nevertheless, this description, unfortunately true, of our time, does not discourage us. The power of Mary has not diminished. We faithfully believe that “She will defeat this heresy like all the others, because she is, today as always, the Woman *par excellence*, the Promised Woman who will crush the head of the serpent.”

William Joseph Chaminade
Letters to the Retreat Masters, August 24, 1839

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The survey we have recently carried out over the last months in the MLCs all over the world, gives us the opportunity to thank God for all the good things that the MLCs do in the Church and the society all over the world. At the same time, we need to acknowledge with humility our weaknesses that question us and ask of us a firm, courageous, and hopeful answer:
 - 1.1.1. We are aware of the needs of the world but we need to implement some practical actions in regard to them.
 - 1.1.2. We love our local communities but it is still difficult for us to collaborate and to feel part of a bigger community.
 - 1.1.3. We work to get new vocations but with few results.
 - 1.1.4. We have too little representation in the social and political sphere.
 - 1.1.5. We share our time and prayer but it is still difficult to share our money.

1.1.6. We feel part of the Church but we are not sufficiently present in her structures of lay participation.

2. COMMUNITY AND MARIANIST FAMILY

- 2.1. We see the Marianist Family as our natural way to live out our faith in community. It is an intuition that is appropriate for the Marianist Charism. We particularly appreciate the horizontal nature of its structure, in which Marianist Lay Communities, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Society of Mary and the Alliance Mariale live and grow interdependently based on their unique Marianist vocation, in union without confusion. We propose to find new opportunities for collaboration and association with these different branches in the present and the immediate future (mixed communities, missions in collaboration, etc.).
- 2.2. The foundation of our communities and of our members is found in Jesus Christ, our true Liberator, so we strive to cultivate our relationship with God, taking Mary as a model. Inspired by the words and actions of our founders¹, we choose to do so in community.
- 2.3. In face of individualism, we choose to live our faith in community. We can offer the world a real experience of a joyful and liberating God, a symbol of love for all those who are seeking spirituality – a characteristic of our times.
- 2.4. This experience of God encourages us to have an open and dialoguing spirit with everyone, allowing us to collaborate in the construction of a more fair and generous society. Our communities are characterized by a welcoming attitude and approach to people, respectful of the times and styles of each person. The spirit of Jesus moves us to welcome and accept everyone as they are.

¹ “The faithful need to gather together in associations: to sustain one another in fervor; to resist, not only the temptations of the devil and the tendencies of our corrupt nature, but also, above all, the seductions of the world; to find, in case one falls, the necessary help. Modern society has a very frigid sentiment toward morality. A fervent Christian, isolated from other Christians and exposed to this sentiment, will necessarily lose the divine light which animates him.” (Concerning Sodalities under the Title of the Immaculate Conception of Mary the Mother of God, 1806)

- 2.5. The community² is, above all, a place to celebrate and live out our faith, and to deepen our personal prayer. We want to move towards more participative and lively celebrations, fostering them with more creativity and innovation, since we consider this necessary to respond to the signs of the times.
- 2.6. We propose to search those inspirations and models in our Marianist tradition that may shed light on our whole community life. We also have to create the means to pass along the solutions that are giving good results in certain countries to those which have difficulties, especially as far as formation and recruitment are concerned.
- 2.7. We need to strengthen our MLC formation to improve our being Christians in the world. To do this we involve all the branches of the Marianist Family in the preparation of leaders, both lay and religious, to improve the formation in our MLCs.
- 2.8. All the communities seek to approach and welcome new members with different initiatives. In too many countries, however, this has been ineffective. This requires a personal and collective reflection about the methods and styles used.
- 2.9. We are horizontal communities and we want to see a clear commitment to financial support, assistance, and performance of the tasks that may be required. We need to reflect about the necessary human and economic resources necessary to attain the goals that we set and to find suitable and sustainable models.
- 2.10. One of the main challenges for our MLCs is to attain a dialoguing openness within our environment, which may result in a greater social and transforming influence, and in a greater missionary commitment.
- 2.11. We want to seek suitable ways to respond, as followers of Jesus, to new and complex challenges of our situation. We are entering a new phase in which the Lord clearly calls us to “leave our homes” (Gen. 12, 1) and to open up to other communities, regions, countries, and to the world. As our communities are located at greater distances from one another, we strive to stay connected and to foster and celebrate our Marianist Charism.
- 2.12. In community, we hope to continue finding spiritual and formational nourishment, but we also work to further strengthen the social justice and missionary aspects of our communities. Our intuition is that the journey may start by the creation of new missionary projects of mutual support, which may

² “Being in Community,” document of the 3rd International Meeting of the Marianist Lay Communities, Philadelphia, (USA), 2001

also create a more favorable atmosphere to share goods and financial resources. No matter how little we have, we encourage MLC members and communities to live simply and to avoid materialism.

3. THE CHURCH

- 3.1. Due to our Baptism, we are part of the Church. We participate in the Church through the Marianist Family. We seek to be open in prayer to the action of the Holy Spirit so that, as Mary did, we can find the right way to respond to the new and complex challenges of our reality.
- 3.2. We offer to all the message of Jesus Christ to respond to the great questions of the people. We particularly offer our spirituality to those who are searching.
- 3.3. Vatican II is for us an important event which opened the door to a new and active role for the laity in the Church, many new visions, and important challenges. We think that its realization must be even further implemented and we propose to deepen our formation on the documents of this Council.
- 3.4. We see the need for MLCs to find ways that allow for a more direct participation and more open and significant representation of the faithful in the life of the Church.
- 3.5. We believe that the liturgy of the Church is a sign and a means of unity. We must promote a more active and conscious participation, making the liturgy more accessible, celebrative, festive, and a reflection of our diverse cultures.
- 3.6. As we gain greater knowledge of the Marianist Charism, we want to share who we are and what we do in the wider Church. Through the example of our lives we can make this visible to the Church.
- 3.7. We promote a more humble, understanding, and dialoguing Church, less wealthy, and closer to human reality³.

³ “In Alliance with Mary”, point 32, Document of the 4th International Meeting of MLCs, Bordeaux, 2005.

- 3.8. The active involvement of the laity (a call that we receive from Vatican II, from other Church documents, and from the inspiration of the Marianist Family founders) is very important for us. As lay Marianists, we are called to take more responsibility in our Church. We have to be present in the lay structures of the Church at all levels: local, regional, national, continental, and international, and to share our experience of the discipleship of equals between lay and religious.
- 3.9. We promote a more active role for women and their participation in decision-making of the Church.
- 3.10. We need to find new ways to encourage the young adults among us, and to more effectively reach out to other young adults that they may make the most of their talents in the Church.

4. **SOCIETY**

- 4.1. Our communities are a part of the society in which they live; we embody the Marianist Charism.
- 4.2. The mission that is proper and specific to the laity should be carried out in the world, so that, with our testimony and our activity, we may contribute to the transformation of the world and the creation of more fair structures.
- 4.3. Family life must be a fundamental place for the development of our faith, our values, and our mission as Christians. Family forms an essential part of our Marianist communities. As such, we work to respect the dignity of each human being.
- 4.4. Our intentional lifestyle leads us to embody a life based on the values of the Gospel. Personal and community discernment lead us to apply these values to relationships between men and women, in the family, in the workplace, and in our more active participation in the Church and society.
- 4.5. In face of the current situation in the world, our MLCs support honesty, sincerity, cooperation, professionalism, effort, and responsibility in our jobs. Being authentic to Gospel values is indispensable for our members. In all areas of our lives, our actions as Marianists will touch other's lives and will influence society.

- 4.6. In our society, the privileges that generate inequalities and the reluctance to share also influence our communities. On many occasions, we limit ourselves to share what is strictly necessary to sustain ourselves. However, we feel the need to change. We think that the time has come to make steps toward new ways to share our goods and resources.
- 4.7. We are called to enhance justice through lobbying and advocacy, to enact and implement balanced policies in respect to human rights.
- 4.8. We are opposed to the violence promoted by intolerance. MLCs seek to promote peace and to live in harmony through developing positive relationships with other religions.
- 4.9. We have already started the journey that will foster our missionary spirit, individually and in community, gearing ourselves towards social issues, making a clear and practical option as a community for less favored people, and making steps that may lead us to share our time, goods, and talents with others even further.
- 4.10. We propose to change our habits of consumption, to reflect about the use of our goods and financial resources, to actively participate in social movements in favor of justice, and to support projects of development in our countries, as well as cooperative projects in developing countries.
- 4.11. It is necessary to get involved in grassroots institutions and organizations (neighborhood associations, social platforms, political party activities, social and ecclesial movements, etc.), to change the immediate world around us without giving up the hope to change the global world.
- 4.12. Finally, we trust that the realization of all these initiatives of change will spread and be shared beyond our communities. *Like Mary, let us invite others to do whatever He tells us*⁴, so that united in the way with the Mother, we reach the Son.

May the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit
Be glorified in all places
Through the Immaculate Virgin Mary
Amen

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which took place in August 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya.*

⁴ Cf. Letter to the Retreat Masters 24 August 1839.