



INTERNATIONAL TEAM / MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITIES
EQUIPO INTERNACIONAL / COMUNIDADES LAICAS MARIANISTAS
EQUIPE INTERNATIONALE / COMMUNAUTÉS LAÏQUES MARIANISTES

Caminar de la mano : el don de los laicos en la familia marianista
Marcher main dans la main: Le Don des laïcs à la famille marianiste
Walking Hand in Hand: The Gift of Laity to the Marianist Family

CIRCULAR
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Our Lady of Carmen



Walker
Walker, your footprints are
the path and nothing more;
Walker, there is no path,
the path is made by walking.
As you walk, you make your path,
and when looking back
you see the path that never
has to be stepped on again.
Walker, there is no path
but wakes upon the sea.

Proverbs and Songs (XXIX)
Antonio Machado . Spanish poet, Generation '98º



Dear sisters and brothers,

During these last 4 years as International President of the MLC, on different occasions I have felt the need to send you orientations and invitations through some circulars. I haven't been able to do that. This is the only time I do it to bring you a handful of dreams, hopes and calls that I believe the Lord brings us as Marianist laity in the MLC today.

I know that in each part of the world, we live in different situations and have plural sensitivities and realities which relate in different ways. It is to this, our multicolored reality, that I address these words with the confidence placed in the Lord, who guides our steps.

Today more than ever, we are called to come out, to reach out to our brother. We are called to walk hand in hand with God, with our brothers and sisters and with the Family.

I like the image of walking hand in hand (motto of our assembly). When two people walk hand in hand, even though they have different heights, weights, complexions and rhythms, they keep in step with each other to move forward together, and make a common path, in unison. They go out together, make their way together and arrive together.

In the last few years, I have had the opportunity to have a more global vision of our Family and this has helped me to consolidate an idea that I have deeply believed in for a long time: we will only have a future if we are a Family, if we are truly a Family. My grandmother used to say that the surname makes you a relative but only love makes you a family. I firmly believe that this is the case. Please, let's love each other.

Father Chaminade certainly dreamed of us this way before El Pilar: as a Family, inserted in the world and in the Church, working hand in hand to bring Christ into the world as Mary did.¹

This is precisely my hope for the future: that we will be able to **WALK HAND IN HAND**, to hold hands. The hands are offered, they come closer, they intertwine, sometimes they push forward, they hold so as not to fall, to pray, to go sideways, neither higher nor lower.

We are fortunate to be a Family, the strengths of each branch add to the whole, they give strength to all of us and add more value than each one on its own. Thus "Unity prevails over conflict"², because our brothers and sisters are always more valuable than our personal attitudes.³

To be able to walk hand in hand we must be what each one of us is and put our talents at the service of the other and of our common mission.⁴

And what are we, then? The official documents of the MLC⁵ define our identity clearly and richly, and are fully valid. The Church recognizes us on the basis of them and of our statutes.

¹ "Common Mission in the Marianist Family". World Council of the Marianist Family, November 2012

² *Evangelii Gaudium*, 226-230

³ Pope Francisco in the 3rd World Council of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities 2014

⁴ "Common Mission". World Council of the Marianist Family, 2014

⁵ Available at www.clm-mlc.org



We know that **we do not have the exclusivity of the Marianist laity**. There are many lay collaborators of Marianist works who feel and live out our charism, but we must learn to differentiate them from a lay Marianist in a MLC. Being a lay Marianist in a MLC is a personal choice, a response to a call from God to live the faith in community from the Marianist charism. There is a call and an answer. It is not a job, it is not a pastoral collaboration, it is not a mission or activity. It is a vocational response to God's call and requires explicit membership in our private international association of the faithful, recognized by the Church.

"We are aware that our being Marianist is a **vocation**, like that of the other branches of our Family. We belong to an MLC because the Lord has called us to collaborate in the building of the Kingdom from our lay, Marianist being inserted in the world. Like Mary, we are simple witnesses to God's presence wherever we are".⁶

We do not want the search for our necessary **autonomy** to move us away from our brothers and sisters. We promote the presence and participation of the rest of the branches in the life and organization of our communities. We want, as the motto of our General Assembly says, to walk hand in hand, and put our gifts at the service of the Family.

Walking hand in hand with God like Mary at the Annunciation.

"Listen to God in our lives and do His will."

Only the following of Jesus Christ justifies belonging to Marianist Lay Communities.⁷ Being a lay Marianist is our way of being, and of being in the Church. It is not a task; it is a call to lead our daily life inserted in the world, aware that our life is inhabited by God.

Our identity document says that a Lay Marianist is one who KNOWS, COMMITS TO, and LIVES the Marianist Charism⁸.

If we **know** the charism, it means that we have basic notions of Marianist history and charism. Let us go further, we need lay experts in charism, we must form ourselves and study our origins to enrich and revitalize the foundational charism.

If we **commit** ourselves it means that we make an explicit commitment to accept the Marianist charism as a life guide. It is not a private commitment, but it is shared with others and recognized by the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities.

If we **live**, it means that our commitment is not an isolated event, but a permanent lifestyle in which we grow in our vocation and participation in the life of the community.

Faith, community, mission and Mary are the four basic pillars of our CHARISM. We must rediscover our documents on these.

"The faith of the heart weighs our knowledge of God, infuses it with love and impels us to transform that loving relationship into concrete actions in our lives".⁹

Our communities are inclusive and welcoming. As a Family, unity without confusion and discipleship of equals are signs of our identity.¹⁰

⁶ "To be a lay Marianist within a MLC". International Team MLC. November 2016

⁷ Book of Life FFMM Zaragoza. MLC Spain

⁸ "The identity of MLC" 1993

⁹ Circular # 4 Isabella R. Moyer "Faith of the Heart in the Heart of the World"



We Marianists always feel called to make our Church and our world a better place. We do not exist only for our own benefit but to respond to those who live in need, near or far.¹¹

We intend that the same spirit of Mary in the Magnificat, the spirit of humility and justice, may soak into our life.

Therefore, let us share with our Marianist family:

- Our quality **presence** and **life coherence**.
- Our **activeness** and **visibility**.
- Our faithfulness to the **foundational charism**, our return to the origins and our growth from them.
- The **inspiration of the Holy Spirit**.
- Our **prayer with Mary**.

Mary's role in the history of salvation is very important. **Thanks to Mary's "yes", God was able to incarnate**, he became a man.

Mary is our path to reach God, She brings us closer to the Father through her Son.

When we pray before the image of Mary in any of her invocations, I always feel that we stand before the Lord beside her. Our placing ourselves before the Father beside the Mother is our particular way of being. BEING means: to be close to those around us, to be a family.... to be available, watchful, awake, cheerful. The Marianist vocation, in all its forms, is better understood in the light of the Annunciation, which is central to the understanding and living out of our charism.

In short, to be available, attentive, awake, happy. To be close to those around us. To be in a family.

Walking hand in hand with our brothers/sisters... like Mary at Pentecost

"To care and strengthen our community"

"If we walk alone we arrive earlier, but if we walk together we arrive further"

Our life in the MLC has made us happy. With our ups and downs and inconsistencies it has been a gift that has supported our lives. It has become complicated and simplified at the same time. These are the paradoxes of the Gospel.

From our **origins** as lay communities (Congregations) in the times of Fr. Chaminade, our life in community is not only good because we like it or it enriches us (which is already a good thing), but rather, it is an **evangelizing event** in itself. It's our main strategy for the mission.

In conclusion, **it is a life worth living**. It is a gift of the Spirit to the Church. If it is a treasure for us, are we going to keep it locked up in our meetings and in our Eucharistic celebrations?

Despite all this, sometimes, we look like a temple where nobody wants to stay.

Sometimes we are not what we are called to be. And it's a "crime", because we all say, without a doubt, that we wouldn't be the way we are without our community.

In our **communities** we care about formation, inclusiveness, openness and welcoming new members. We meet regularly to pray together, to learn about the spirituality, morals and ethics of our time.

¹⁰ "Being in community" 2001

¹¹ Documents: "The mission of MLC" 1997. And "MLC in the Church and in the World" 2009.



We seek to deepen our spirituality through personal and community discernment and participation in mission. We create community by sharing our faith life and our personal needs.

We are in communication with our organizational structure as a private international Association of the faithful through our regional, national and local responsables. We are self-financing and contribute to the sustainability of our national and international organization.

In our communities we **care for the welcoming, the hospitality, the accompaniment and spiritual guide, we encourage the participation of the sacraments, we take good care of the joy.**

Let us take good care of each other, having, as Father Chaminade said, a **character that is not fixed, but flexible**, or accommodating to each person.¹²

This indication from Chaminade to guide all our sisters by and with love, by adapting flexibly to each one, is absolutely striking. It is an example of the Marianist style of "adaptation", which comes from the spiritual core or heart of our charism: the mystery of the Incarnation.

Let's be witnesses to a possible world with another kind of relationship. Now that relationships are becoming more and more superficial and functional, creating a family is a sign of commitment to others; it is a sign of confidence that God is placing us together with those we can and must learn to love. It is part of our charism: Mary was a family woman, she created a family... that was part of her mission.

Missionary unity is the community, not the individual. Looking into the future, perhaps we should update and broaden this spectrum: **the mission is for the whole family.**

Mary, a witness of God's presence in our daily lives, always invites us to grow in our faith life with small experiences of community; God calls us to be watchful to the small details in the basis of the Church, close to the needy, as Mary did.

Walking as a family like Mary in Bethlehem, and at the foot of the cross.

One of our greatest gifts is the ever-deepening awareness that to be Marianist is to be family. In our MLC Statutes and in each of our international documents, we proudly claim that we are united in a single spiritual family with our brothers and sisters. We realize that this model of family, given to us by our founders, is both prophetic and contemporary today.¹³

The "family" dimension is part of the **DNA of the charism** received and lived out by the four branches that today make up the Marianist Family, unlike other spiritual families that are currently seeking to intensify this dimension.

What is our **Family model**?

A spiritual family with a structure that unites lay and religious on an equal footing.¹⁴ It has not been easy to achieve this spirit of equality while affirming our diversity.

¹² *Letters to Adela by Chaminade. Letter # 117*

¹³ *"Being Marianist, Being Family" Circular # 1 Isabella Moyer MLC 2010*

¹⁴ *World Council of the Marianist Family Statutes, §1.3 and 1.4.*



A healthy family that provides a safe environment, recognizes the need to clarify roles and responsibilities, embraces and uses all its gifts to accommodate to the changing needs of each member.¹⁵ This is our way of being family.

We are aware that roles in our family are dynamic, as they are in every healthy family. We can't forget that. Fortunately, almost always "Unity prevails over conflict"¹⁶, because our brothers and sisters are always more valuable than our personal attitudes.¹⁷ That's what Fr. Chaminade said.¹⁸

We, the laity, still need to strengthen our own identity within the family to make ourselves visible. We have to overcome prejudices in favor of cooperation and interrelation with our brothers and sisters in the other branches.

"Each one of us, whichever branch we belong to, feels like a member of a larger Family and bears in our heart a concern for the life and development of the other branches".¹⁹

Our history as an international organization celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. The SM and the FMI have just celebrated their bicentennial. The AM has celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. It is clear that, as in every family, the life moments, the experience of the members, the maturity and the dedication to the common project are different. The laity still often lacks commitment, maturity and stability. Pope Francis indirectly insists on the need to strengthen lay responsibility when he says: "The awareness of this lay responsibility, born of the Baptism and the Confirmation, does not manifest itself in the same way everywhere. In some cases because they were not formed to assume important responsibilities, in others because they did not find a space in their particular Churches to be able to express themselves and act, as a result of excessive clericalism that keeps them away from decisions."²⁰

We have to start to consider how we want the existing reality to become more and more "family-friendly".

We always talk about working "in union without confusion".²¹ I would say a little more and more daring, if you will allow me, **in union, even sometimes, despite the confusion**. It's okay if we are wrong. Let us together seek ways to help us clarify the role of each branch within the Family.

Without a doubt, walking together will bring friction and misunderstandings among us. Let us learn to manage our differences from the family 'management' point of view. Let us practice **fraternal correction** and common discernment in order to make our own **way**. Don't we do this in our families on a daily basis? We know it and we can do it.

Let us do it with tenderness and patient support, taking care of each other. "And if there is any correction to be made, may it be made tenderly and privately."²² And if we are to make a mistake, let us do it on the side of tolerance.

¹⁵ *Being Marianist, Being Family. Circular #1. Isabella R. Moyer, 2010*

¹⁶ *Evangelii Gaudium, 226-230*

¹⁷ *POPE FRANCISCO ON THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS OF ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND NEW COMMUNITIES 2014*

¹⁸ *Escritos y Palabras Vol. I 153.1*

¹⁹ *"Common Mission in the Marianist Family" #3. World Council for the Marianist Family November 2012*

²⁰ *Evangelii gaudium (n. 102)*

²¹ *The MLC in the Church and in the World, (2009), §2.1.*

²² *Marriage Moments #782 Susan Vogt*



Let us try to fill our national and local **family councils** with life, searching and giving light, making concrete decisions. We can't wait to have perfect designs to start walking, let's take advantage of the concrete opportunities that crop up around us in every place and time, may they be a starting point. Let's strive to live, think and decide as a family, so that it flows regularly. Let us participate and promote the Family events (day of prayer, day of vocation, etc.).

Let's not get impatient. The Spirit will guide us.

It is, after all, a matter of **pampering** the everyday life and, as Mary did, by incarnating the Word in the lives of the men and women of our time. To bear witness to a family in the heart of the society. To **communicate and take care** of each other. To be able to **ask others** what we need from them, to share our strengths and weaknesses, to dream together about common projects. To facilitate and promote the active **participation** of the members of the other branches in our **decision-making and governing bodies**, not by forcing situations, but by growing in the sharing of life and even of decisions. To **share** more equitably in the **financial needs** of the Marianist Family. This is an obligation and a sign of maturity that remains a handicap in some places and for some of us.

We need to reach **MATURITY as a branch**, and continue to define our governance structures and organizational and functional procedures.

To be inclusive, to be cozy. Welcoming has always been a distinct sign for the Marianist family and we must cultivate it at this time, rather than shut ourselves away. To be a lay Marianist is to live a Church experience, with the color of the familiar. It is to offer oneself to the world, from the joy of the Gospel. It is a genetic predisposition to create bonds, a predisposition to joy and fraternity, to welcoming and communion.

Start walking our path, as Mary did at the Visitation

"Walker there is no path, you make your path as you walk" Antonio Machado

The missionary outlook is found at the origin of the founders' inspiration. Every congregant had a mission adapted to his possibilities. "By virtue of their common baptismal dignity, the lay faithful are co-responsible, together with ordained ministers and religious, for the mission of the Church."²³

We wish to foster in the MLC world-wide the **evangelizing dynamism** to which the Church calls us through Pope Francis, by encouraging communities to pray, discern and bring the Nairobi document to life "Marianist Lay Communities in the Church and in the World". We wish to insist on openness to the whole Church, to the peripheries and to the poor and to promote awareness of the Marianist works of social justice (Magnificat Friday) throughout the world.

We want to strengthen the mission in the Marianist Family in a proactive way, in the spirit of the document "Common Mission in the Marianist Family"²⁴

We are warned of the danger of being a self-referential Church, and we are called to go out to the peripheries and live out mercy. Let us strive to have an attitude of renewal and conversion that identifies us with Christ, and that invites us to come out

²³ *Exhortation Chistifideles laici (30-12-1998) by John Paul II, #15*

²⁴ *Promoted by the World Council of the Marianist Family in 2012. Available at www.marianist.org*



to meet the poor, as we become instruments for their liberation, promotion and integration into society.

We must develop a personal and community mission to "be present in the world, which means for us, to try to know, love and transform it with Jesus' heart and strength".²⁵

By our common Marianist vocation we feel called to contribute to the development of the "**Marian face**" of the Church, more fraternal than hierarchical, based on the common dignity that comes from baptism; sensitive, like Mary, to the needs of the world, and, with Mary, unconditionally open by faith to what the Lord tells us.²⁶ We must be Family today, in a Church always called to be dynamic.

Let us seek to have the courage to exercise and practice our being a family, with honesty, humility, humor, skill and passion. Let us pray to the Lord for courage to unlearn and change, to innovate and create, in times of mediocrity and conformity. Let us pray for the courage to think and reflect, to try and err, in times of uncertainty and mistrust. Let us dare leave our routine and our comfort zone and walk out to the peripheries to be witnesses to and missionaries of Mary, attentive to the signs of the times, as we opt to walk alongside the most disadvantaged.

We already have concrete experiences of common mission and shared life in the many realities in which we are present, such as in the Marianist Family of Spain, experiences of community in Peru... etc. From our base communities there will be more calls to build together. Let us be attentive to these calls to **respond**, together **as a Family**, with deeds, activities and works, to the needs and problems that afflict the most vulnerable and marginalized people at the present time.

We gather in communion with the faith of the Church, which is our trunk. And we proclaim that TO LIVE OUR FAITH IN THE LAY COMMUNITIES IS A CALL FROM GOD, WHO MAKES US HAPPY, AND THAT THIS IS SOMETHING WE WISH TO OFFER AND SHARE with those who are around us.

It is the **time of the laity**, it is time to live our charism without reserve, with passion, and from who we are, to open ourselves to the Church and to our distant brothers and sisters, to the migrant, to the one who suffers. Because being a lay Marianist today is a call to go out into the openness, to take risks, to set out on a journey.

May the Virgin of the Sea always accompany us in our service to our brothers and sisters and may the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be glorified everywhere by the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

AMEN

²⁵ "The Mission of the MLC" (Liria 1997)

²⁶ "Common Mission in the Marianist Family" #3. World Council of the Marianist Family November 2012