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MARIANISTI – AMMINISTRAZIONE GENERAL – Via Latina, 22 – 00179 Roma – Italia

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# 147

Rome, September 12, 2017

## THE MAIN AXES OF MARIANIST EDUCATION TODAY

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

All the Unit Assistants for Education of the Society of Mary met in Rome, at our Casa Generalizia, from July 5 to 13, 2017. The objective of the meeting was threefold: to examine the missionary situation of the Units since the last General Chapter; to understand how the Assistants for Education are working to accompany and ensure a good Marianist identity within our works; and to examine the possibilities of international collaboration among our educational works.

Before coming to the meeting, the participants had done a formidable job of analyzing their local situation, highlighting its strengths, opportunities, and challenges. This preliminary labor was very important for us, the organizers of this meeting, to understand their needs and to guide the choice of topics to be tackled. During the meeting, the working method alternated between presentations by speakers and the reactions from the participants, who responded to each presentation on the basis of the elements of their local experiences. Formational input on each topic led to work in the plenary assembly and open exchanges, enabling us to put together instructions that could serve as common guidelines.

The eight-day meeting, which brought together the members of the General Council with all the Unit Assistants for Education, enabled us to form a large world community who prayed, celebrated, discussed and reflected together on questions of education. It gave us the opportunity to understand what is happening in the apostolic mission of the Units, to reflect on the issues and challenges encountered, and to seek together, in the mind of our Founder and in the riches of our tradition, for mutual enlightenment and a real stimulus to move forward.

Some topics, in particular, were very enlightening: that of the *apostolate of education according to the Marianist tradition*, that of the *Office of Education* in the context of the leadership of the Society of Mary in *Three Offices*, and finally that of the *role of Religious Life and of our communities* in mission. To help you understand what has nourished our reflection, I am conveying the essential ideas in this document, as recommended to me by the participants before leaving. The confrontation

of the lessons learned on these subjects with the reality prevailing in the mission of our Units gave rise to the formulation of four major areas of interest which the Assistants for Education consider important today for the accomplishment of our mission. To communicate to you all these achievements of the meeting, I will use the following outline, in four parts:

- I – The apostolate of education according to the Marianist tradition
- II – The *Three Offices* and the particular role of the Office of Education
- III – The role of religious life in our educational mission
- IV – The main axes of Marianist education today

There is no intention here of presenting a treatise on Marianist pedagogy. As mentioned above, it is simply a question of informing the whole membership of the Society of Mary of the reflections that nourished our meeting and of leaving to the Assistants themselves a memo on which they will continue to work.

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## **I - THE APOSTOLATE OF EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE MARIANIST TRADITION**

In order to grasp something about this topic, the best starting point is to question our Founder and our tradition. This means returning to our sources, without limiting ourselves to secondary texts authored by others.

### **1. Education in the Thought of Father Chaminade**

Education as a mission in the plan of Father Chaminade is well synthesized in the Constitutions of 1839, especially in articles 251 to 268, dedicated to education.<sup>1</sup> Without attempting to be exhaustive, it suffices here to take up the *great principles*, which reflect the thought of the Founder on education.

- By education we mean "all the means by which religion can be made to seep into the mind and into the heart of men" (art 251). We must underline the verb "seep into" which is not insignificant and which shows that faith does not impose itself, but rather, subtly proposes itself.
- Education is a means of "preservation" (art. 253): therefore, a manner of working with the pupil that prevents him from closing himself off from the faith.
- We teach in order to educate (art. 256) and educate through instruction (arts. 258 and 266). This highlights the importance of the faith-culture relationship. It implies that the student is assured a quality education. One cannot educate by neglecting instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> They are to be found in *Ecrits et Paroles*, Tome 7, Document [28], page 301 of the French edition.

- The principles of *gradualness*, *patience* and *indulgence* (arts. 261-262), combined with that of *adaptation* (art. 267), express respect for human dynamics.
- Education is the fruit of a *life-witness*: education is accomplished through contagion. Everything is based on the faith-inspired look and attitude of the educator.

These principles are invariable and therefore still valid today, even if the processes, methods and means of living them out have changed in order to follow the evolution of human societies and adapt to their needs. The echoes of these founding texts are reflected in our *Rule of Life* (RL 72-74 and 5.11-5.15), after having passed through the crucibles of the General Chapters, particularly those of 1971 and 1981, and of the necessary adaptations which enabled our Marianist education to gain in perspective, in breadth, and in depth. The school is now seen as a harmonious community, called to integrate itself into the life of the Church.

## **2. The Role of Educational Works in Awakening and Educating in Faith**

The Chaminadian perspective of mission has its starting point in its preoccupation with the *Awakening and Educating in Faith*; it is the non-negotiable objective of which any Marianist work should never lose sight, lest it be distorted. But how can we understand this *Awakening* and this *Education in Faith*? How does one ensure that?

- a) The *Awakening of Faith* takes place during an encounter, since, as we have seen in the above principles, "*it does not impose itself, it subtly proposes itself.*" Normally it arises as a consequence of an encounter that occurs through our works. In order for this encounter to take place, it is necessary that "*something or someone be proposed*" to the individuals, and that they "*be able to listen to the proposal that is made and give a response.*" Let us call "*Announcement*" the process that is responsible for proposing "*something or someone,*" and "*Education*" the process by which one hears and embraces what has been proposed. It is at the intersection of this Announcement and this Education where Faith arises; it is at the moment when the two meet that the spark occurs and the awakening takes place. Our educational works therefore have as their primary vocation to be these places where opportunities are multiplied for encounters of this type that generate Faith.
- b) *Education in Faith*. The Faith that emerges from the encounter between "Announcement" and "Education" needs to be educated in order to grow and take root. To speak of education, also means to speak of the anthropology that underlies this education and determines it. There is no neutral education. For us, Marianists, we work at *education in Faith* by relying on an anthropology that has two fundamental principles.

The first principle is that people should be educated and formed so as to be capable of faith. We seek to become, like Mary, persons who are capable, on the one hand, of *listening* to others openly, receiving insights from them and accepting them into our lives; and, on the

other hand, ***making a response*** that goes as far as a commitment, for example, in the school. This principle gives a special meaning to our educational work today, which must focus on the effort to release people from the prison of subjectivism, which has taken them hostage, and lead them back into the real world of relationships. That invites us to educate people to live life as a vocation, i.e., a response to a call that comes from outside the self, inviting one to commit one's life to a project in service of others.

As for the second anthropological principle, it asks us to propose the message and person of Christ, using our educational works as centers of proclamation and dissemination for that purpose. This work is not only exercised by teaching, catechesis and preaching, but also, and above all, by the example of one's life. It is an education that must be done by contagion, as we have already said.

Since *Awakening* and *Educating in Faith* are accomplished through our works, these must have spaces and places dedicated to facilitating the realization of these objectives, and well thought-out pastoral plans that take anthropology and kerygma into account.

- c) In addition to being places of encounter which facilitate the emergence of Faith, our works are also privileged places for the encounter between this Faith, which is born in persons, and the *culture* in which these works are implanted and by which persons are conditioned. Indeed, the people who listen to our message are determined by their own respective cultures; it is important, therefore, that the agents in our works have a very good understanding of the local culture so as to adapt their message and their education. This important dimension of the dialogue between Faith and culture is unavoidable, if we aim for an authentic incarnation of the Gospel in the life of the people within a given culture and in that culture itself.

In short, we can say that our works are charismatic places where Faith emerges and is educated. They are also places of encounter where there is a necessary dialogue between Faith and local cultures so that the message of Jesus might have a real resonance and meaning in people's lives.

### **3. Formal Works and Non-Formal Works of Education.**

Notwithstanding what we have just stated above, it is not a question of diverting our works, whatever they may be, from their original function. When a work is created, it is often intended to meet a specific need expressed, or at least recognized, by the competent authorities and desired by its beneficiaries. It is not, therefore, a question of abandoning those intentions, even to promote its apostolic character. In the case of a formal work of education, such as a school, it must be respected for its intrinsic purpose, without ever becoming a pretext for some other end. This is a matter of honesty and respect for the autonomy of temporal realities. In general, this principle, well respected in our Marianist institutions, makes parents admire and feel attracted to our schools, and earns us the respect of the public authorities who are very concerned, like us, with the educational function of the school.

Nevertheless, this does not prevent the Society of Mary from displaying its identity in the school, with the greatest clarity, and bringing to it the riches of our charism. Thanks to God, we have always been able to combine these two demands: letting our schools be schools, while also being able to create, around these schools, activities that lead to the realization of our apostolic aims, i.e. the awakening of and education in faith. Here are a few examples of activities, among so many others: prayer groups of varied styles for the maturation of the Christian life; celebrations of the sacraments; reflection groups, permanent or *ad hoc*, on major human and social questions and on vocation in the broad sense; choirs; Catholic and social action movements; celebrations that punctuate the life of the Church and the Society of Mary; dance and theater groups; Scouting, etc. In his petition of April 7, 1825, to King Charles X, Father Chaminade considered this dimension of our activities as a characteristic that is specific to the Society of Mary, when he wrote: "... what distinguishes our schools [from those of the LaSalle Christian Brothers], are the accessory institutions by which we try to have them accompanied everywhere in order to sustain in the children ... good habits and religious sentiments...."<sup>2</sup>

- a) When we speak of the works of the Society of Mary, we like to distinguish among them the formal works of education (schools and universities), the spiritual works (parishes, shrines and spiritual centers), and non-formal works of education (social centers, artisanal centers, foundations, etc.). If, with the first two categories, the Society of Mary already has a long tradition behind it, it is still in unknown territory and grappling with the works of the third group. This justifies the Recommendation of the General Chapter of 2012, calling for greater attention to it.<sup>3</sup>

The Assistants for Education have studied this topic during our meeting, listening to the reports from those Units who have experience and, with them, exchanged reflections. All agree that this is a sector of activity that is gaining momentum and place in the mission of the Society of Mary, as a whole. They believe, however, with most of them being dependent on outside resources in so many ways, that unless these works are conceived and promoted in a spirit of incarnation, they will have no future. The spirit of incarnation is understood as a concern to imitate Jesus in his choosing to relate concretely on the human level, joining them in their actual situations and concerns, and working to help them raise themselves up. Promoting these works without this spirit of incarnation, bringing solutions from the outside, has no future.

In any case, it is important today to consider integrating into the activities and services offered by these non-formal works, a formational program that allows both agents and beneficiaries to develop the values of the *Characteristics of Marianist Education*, as it is done in our formal

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<sup>2</sup> (Letter n°328 of April 7, 1825: Petition to King Charles X)

<sup>3</sup> GC 2012, #45: "...that the General Assistants for Education and Temporalities continue to coordinate and promote reflection on our works of social development and non-formal education. This reflection should include the experience from across our Units and give particular attention to how they are undertaken in a manner that is truly communal, distinctively Marianist and financially responsible."

educational works and in our spiritual works. These non-formal works must also be centers that awaken and educate in Faith. It is even advisable that they not be excluded from the network of the other works of the Unit, and that all be able to interact and influence one another. What we learn from non-formal works should help us reflect on how we provide formal education and work at social transformation. We must make sure that in the future there be a gradual levelling among the social classes and that the number of poor people and disenfranchised immigrants be reduced as much as possible.

- b) In reality, all our works are works of education. The distinction between formal and non-formal, therefore, relates only to the nature of the "works" and not to the "education" itself, so that our classification of works would be limited to two categories: "**formal works**" of education and "**non-formal works**" of education, the first being those recognized by the authorities whose laws and orientations they follow. Spiritual works, and what we have referred to above as non-formal works, fall into the second category of "non-formal" works of education. Henceforth, when we speak of our works, this is the distinction that we shall adopt: "**formal works**" of education (schools and universities...) and "**non-formal works**" of education (parishes, shrines, spiritual centers, social centers, artisanal centers, foundations ...).

#### **4. International Collaboration among Educational Works**

The need for international collaboration among educational works is real and is felt in all the Units. None of them believes that they are so developed that they have all the answers and nothing to learn from others. Consequently, the Unit Assistants for Education believe that they need each other to move forward in promoting fruitful collaboration. And it is not the common points of interest that are lacking.

- Being called upon to work on the same task, the Assistants see in the collaboration a means to stay in touch, to work together, to multiply their strengths, and to learn from each other's experiences, as far as possible, through existing communication's means. One no longer hesitates to proclaim the maxim: "either we collaborate or we die!"
- Moreover, the very fact of collaborating creates a disposition that shapes the "*sense of belonging*" to a common undertaking and stimulates work in the common mission.
- Collaboration is a concrete way of putting into practice Father Chaminade's expression, exclaiming "*Our work is great, it is magnificent ... universal ...*" (Letter of August 24, 1839, to the retreat preachers). It offers us the opportunity to show by facts that this truly is a universal mission.

The path to be taken in this collaboration should begin with the concrete identification of needs, means and collaborative activities that can be promoted among the works of each Unit; clearly, everyone will be able to participate in the animation of the international network, starting from the local network of works of a given Unit. After that, it is simply a matter of more widely connecting, articulating and revitalizing.

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## **II - THE THREE OFFICES AND THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

Since this was a meeting of Assistants for Education, seeking to go deeper into the meaning of this responsibility was self-evident. But in our system of shared government through the *Three Offices*, an office can never be understood alone, but in relation to the two others.

### **1. Three Ways to Achieve the Threefold Purpose of Founding the Society of Mary**

The *Three Offices* that form the basis of the government of the Society of Mary are inherent in the inspiration of Father Chaminade who saw in them the means available to our *Institute* to achieve its three founding objectives. Two basic documents in *The Chaminade Legacy*, Vol. V (Documents 3 and 5) explain this.<sup>4</sup>

According to Father Chaminade, the three objectives pursued by the Institute are the *evangelical perfection* of the members, which corresponds to the spiritual dimension; *the apostolate* turned towards the outside and the service of persons; and the will to *avoid the contagion of the world* in which we are inserted. In order to reach them, Chaminade proposed that action be taken in three dimensions: **Zeal** to pursue the three objectives, **Instruction** to attain them all, and **Work** to complete them in their entirety.<sup>5</sup> As we see, it is not a question of applying a means for each objective; but for each objective, all three dimensions - zeal, instruction and work - are necessary. Evangelical perfection, for example, needs zeal; it needs instruction and needs work to become incarnate. It's the same for the apostolate and for the avoidance of the contagion of the world.

These three activities are in the image of Jesus Christ who prayed, worked and taught; they always are put in practice jointly under the authority of the superior. If one loses sight of this synergy to limit oneself only to a distribution of "competencies," there is the risk of making the *Three Offices* simply a system of organization similar to a country's government ministries. This is not our conception of the *Three Offices*.

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<sup>4</sup> Document 3: Conferences on the Draft of the *Rule* of the Daughters of Mary, August 1816. Document 5: is a kind of analysis that Chaminade wrote for Archbishop d'Aviau of Bordeaux about the operations of the *Three Offices* in the *Rule* of the Daughters of Mary [1816]

<sup>5</sup> *The Chaminade Legacy*, Vol 5, Document 6, article 40, page 101.

## **2. Role of the Office of Education**

Even if, over time, the definition and content of each office has evolved, the *Rule of Life*, which collects and updates our tradition, presents the Office of Education as a missionary office, oriented towards the apostolate. It is concerned with all that prepares and makes people capable of welcoming the faith, and living it, especially through “*intellectual, moral, and professional formation*” (RL 106). This concern dates back to the time of Father Chaminade, where the person in charge of the Office was to intervene both at the level of the novices, and generally among the men in all stages of initial formation, as well as with the professed religious in the communities, without forgetting the members of the Sodalities and the persons involved in the external missions, in order to instruct them and to “spread Christian wisdom and teach the more essential humanistic subjects.”

In keeping with the spirit of the *Three Offices* which determines our “shared governance”, the Assistant for Education - like the other two Assistants - is not only an “advisor” but also an “executive officer” with specific responsibilities (RL 7.19). These latter are not meant to limit their scope of intervention to one type of activity, but rather to indicate the aspects that they must supervise, regardless of the sector of life and activity. There are no works reserved exclusively for the Office of Education, works just for the Office of Religious Life, or works merely for the Office of Temporalities. The three offices act jointly in each and every one of the works of the Society of Mary, both in the formal and non-formal works of education, including in the parishes entrusted to the Marianists.

My proposal here is intended to remind the Unit Assistants for Education of the full extent of their responsibility, which is not limited solely to schools and academic institutions. If there are parishes and other non-formal works in the Unit, they also require his attention and intervention because they are also places of education, even if they are described as “non-formal,” as opposed to those works that are well-established, recognized by governmental and state bodies. Ultimately, whether it concerns the internal life of the Society of Mary or its apostolate, which is more oriented towards the outside, the Office of Education is there, always acting in conjunction with the other Offices, to ensure the formation of individuals and to accompany the development of all the skills necessary for their tasks.

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### III - THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL MISSION

Marianist religious life, through its members and its religious communities, plays a decisive role in the exercise of the Marianist mission. The conferences presented during the meeting reminded us of the foundations and justifications for this role, as well as all the implications that follow.

#### 1. Can a Marianist Missionary Project Exist without Religious?

The answer is obviously yes, since Father Chaminade, before founding his two religious congregations, lived a long and rich missionary experience of sixteen years without religious. The Sodality of the Immaculate which he had set in motion involved hundreds of people of all ages, all social categories, men and women, and constituted an extremely well structured and thought-out mission: the first volume of *The Chaminade Legacy* contains more than 500 pages of these statutory texts. And this fruitful mission of Christianization made it possible to fill the Bordeaux seminary, to contribute to the rebirth of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to offer a good number of candidates for new religious foundations, not to mention the influence of these lay groups in the social activity of the Church in dealing with the little chimneysweeps, prisoners, the sick, or even promoting popular reading, etc. Thirty-three years later, Father Chaminade could write to Pope Gregory XVI, explaining to him that lay groups were founded in order *to revive or rekindle everywhere the divine torch of faith....* With all this, one can thus assert, without risking deception, that a fruitful Marianist missionary project can exist without the religious!

#### 2. The Role of Religious Life and Religious

The above paragraph could seem to indicate that the laity can be self-sufficient in a missionary Marianist project. And yet the thread of the thought and actions of the Founder shows that he has no doubt about the necessity of religious life. Indeed, on May 1, 1817, Father Chaminade gave this reply to M. Lalanne, who presented himself to him as a candidate for religious life: "This is what I have been awaiting for a long time! May God be praised! ... The moment has come to put into execution the plan which I have been pursuing since God inspired me with it thirty years ago."<sup>6</sup>

Later, he wrote to Pope Gregory XVI in *Letter 1076* already mentioned above: "I have believed before God, Most Holy Father, that it was necessary to found two new orders, the one of virgins and the other of young men, who would prove to the world by the fact of their good example that Christianity is not an outmoded institution. They would show that the Gospel is as practicable today as it was 1800 years ago ... »"<sup>7</sup>

All this indicates that Father Chaminade had always thought about the Religious Life. The great success of his activities with the laity does not detract from the necessity of Religious Life, just as

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<sup>6</sup> Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, *Notice historique sur la Société de Marie*, Bordeaux 1858, p. 6-7, in *The Chaminade Legacy*, Vol. V, Document 17. [6], p. 365.

<sup>7</sup> Letter n° 1076 of September 16, 1838, to Pope Gregory XVI.

the necessity of Religious Life does not detract from the importance of working with the laity. There is no exclusivity of the kind "either the laity or the religious"; but both: "both the laity and the religious!" So said, what does religious life specifically have to offer<sup>8</sup> ?

### 2.1. What Chaminade Expects of the Religious: to be "The Man Who Would Not Die"

In 1824, in a text he wrote to defend the lay groups against the critics of parish priests, Father Chaminade also spoke of religious life. And there he explains that to animate such a group, one man is no longer enough: "... there has to be a man who would not die, that is to say, a *society of men* who have *given themselves to God* for this work, who will carry it on at a *mature age* after having *been formed* to it under holy *obedience* and will *transmit to one another* the same spirit and the same means."<sup>9</sup>

This is the only time Father Chaminade uses this expression: "a man who would not die." Note the subjunctive which is used and which expresses a desire and a hope which show that these cannot be realized except under certain conditions. It is those conditions which give us indications of what Father Chaminade expects from the religious. Inspired by a presentation made during the meeting and by the discussions shared among the participants, I will try to interpret them.

- To form *the man who would not die*, Chaminade expected from his religious that they form a "*Society of men*." This is an allusion to the community. We need to be together to meet the challenge of our mission, everywhere and in every era. It is not a sum of individual responses, but a body that arises from the union of hearts and souls.
- Chaminade also expected religious men to be "*Men given to God*": As religious we are not men given to a project we want to ensure, but given to God. It is paramount to give ourselves first to God, and then we can labor at God's works.
- The next condition is "*maturity of age*." This maturity must be taken in the broadest sense. It is not simply a matter of ceasing to be a "child" in the physiological sense, but of having a maturity based on the experience of life and a certain stability of identity.
- Chaminade also wanted his religious to be "*men formed ... under obedience*." Being formed to prepare well for the mission is important. This is not innate. But it must be done under obedience, because it is a formation that has the specificity of being a service done by listening to God. Formation, therefore, is important for the mission of the Unit, not for personal ambition.
- "*Transmit to each other*." This need to transfer know-how from one generation to the next is essential for the survival and continuity of our common mission. Another text of Father

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<sup>8</sup> I refer you to the Circular n° 6 of Superior General Manuel Cortés, to reread what religious life offers to our works.

<sup>9</sup> "Answers to the Objections ...", *The Chaminade Legacy*, I, Document 154.23, p. 694.

Chaminade, which explains the importance of this act of transmission, says: "If young religious are employed after their leaving the novitiate, they are soon bewildered. They have to be trained under older masters in the schools already in full operation and well-staffed."<sup>10</sup> Article 29 of the Acts of the Chapter of 2012 also echoes this reality when it urges the use of mentors, "experienced educators, lay or religious, who can act as mentors for the professional development of the Brothers and lay collaborators who have less educational experience."

- Action must be taken with "*the same spirit and the same means*"; in other words, the knowledge and the practice of certain elements of our tradition allow us to strengthen our identity and our experience of the Marianist life. Without this transmission, one cannot have *a man who would not die!* Our common plan is that inspired by Father Chaminade, which we then adapt to the current circumstances, following the recommendations of the *Rule* and the general or local chapters.

Those are, as the words of the Founder suggest, the conditions to be maintained among the religious and the communities of the Society of Mary, if we want to be a part of this *man who would not die*. Since it is a wish attached to conditions, this one could never be realized if the latter were absent or badly lived out. Let us strive to live fully this dream of *the man who would not die*, by working well on the conditions attached to it.

## **2.2. An Old Experience, an Inspiration for the Mission of the Religious**

On the particular role of the religious in the Marianist mission, there is a very important historical fact, connected with the formation of the laity, which deserves to be recalled and known. It is a very old experience that was at the origin of the Normal Schools of the Society of Mary. Its principle is: "*to multiply the number of Christians, multipliers must be multiplied.*"

Everything starts from the observation of Father Chaminade who saw in children the first victims of the immorality of the time. "These children are lost if they don't have good schoolteachers close at hand. From there, the indispensable necessity of forming a sufficiently great number of schoolteachers, so as to be able to employ them in all the communes! From there, the need for multiplying the normal schools in all the departments!"<sup>11</sup> Now, at that time, many teachers were poorly trained, ignorant, and sometimes immoral. That was well before the Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose first normal school will open only in 1829 in Rouen; and the State had only opened three normal schools in all of France.<sup>12</sup>

For Chaminade, the surest way to protect these children is to "give them good teachers," and thus to train them, the older teachers and especially the new ones. He sees it as a "*great means of reforming*

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Letter 202* (1822), §3°.

<sup>11</sup> *Letter n° 506*, March 4, 1830, to M. Lalanne, Paris.

<sup>12</sup> In Strasbourg, in 1810; in 1820, in Heldefange, Moselle, and Bar-le-Duc, Meuse.

*the morals and spirit of the French.*"<sup>13</sup> He was keenly aware that he was lacking in religious personnel, both in numbers and experience. Indeed, in 1824, the Society of Mary had only 7 years of existence and had only 7 communities and 48 religious (41 brothers and 7 priests), including some still in formation.<sup>14</sup> And yet, he decided and initiated his first *École Normale* [Normal School] in Saint-Rémy that very year. He sent eleven brothers to settle in the immense property he had just bought and which was still in very bad condition.

The experiment began with the organization of retreats for the teachers in the region. The first, which took place in April 1824, lasted 15 days and brought together 60 teachers. Other retreats were to be held regularly in order to gradually influence all the teachers already active, and improve their methods and their spirit. In the same year, the Normal School, offering new teachers a solid intellectual, pedagogical, and spiritual formation, opened. Father Chaminade, satisfied with the experiment, was considering the gradual opening of other teacher-training institutions throughout France. He was ready to reform all the elementary education in France. Let us not forget that he had only 48 religious!

In mid-July of 1830 he already writes a circular letter to send to all the departmental prefects of France, proposing that they open a normal school in their departments under the responsibility of the brothers. But two weeks later, the revolution of 1830 broke out and the project was completely stopped.

This historical fact, as envisaged and implemented by the Founder, speaks to us today in more ways than one. It is very similar to what many of the Units are now experiencing: with few religious, they, nevertheless, have great influence and great missionary outreach. The fundamental principle behind all this is to know how to form formators, to trust the lay collaborators and form them, and entrust them with responsibilities. Chaminade, because he had but few religious, asked his brothers to be the formators of those who were to form the children. He wanted *to make every teacher a multiplier of Christians*. And the brothers who were in charge of forming those teachers became the *multipliers of teachers*. Even the working brothers who were in the community and who did not directly teach, indirectly participated in this apostolate of "*multiplying multipliers*" by their spiritual and material support. That was their part in the educational mission, as expressed in the Constitutions of 1839.

That project which unites the *spiritual and pedagogical aspects*, was typical of our tradition. On the basis of this same principle, several Units, despite a reduced number of religious, continue to maintain good missionary dynamism. It is a model that, it seems to me, is within the reach of all Units today. Whatever the age and number of religious members, if we are willing to try it, it will be difficult for our missionary effectiveness to disappear.

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<sup>13</sup> Letter 502, Bordeaux, February 15, 1830, to M. Lalanne, Paris.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lawrence Cada, SM, Early members of the Society of Mary, pp. 263-264

#### **IV - THE MAIN AXES OF MARIANIST EDUCATION TODAY**

All of the above themes contributed to the dialogue of the participants and gave rise to the formulation of the following four main axes that the Unit Assistants for Education consider today to be of particular importance in the mission. These four main axes are:

- The role of religious life and the Office of Education in accordance with the spirit of our tradition;
- The functioning of our educational works;
- *Non-Formal* works of Education.
- International collaboration among the educational works of the SM.

As they are formulated, these main axes speak for themselves and need no long commentaries. However, just to illustrate what is behind each of these topics, I shall limit myself with sharing, in the very words of the Assistants, a few remarks from those which recurred most frequently.

##### **1. The Role of Religious Life and the Office of Education in Accordance with the Spirit of Our Tradition.**

That Marianist religious life, through its individual members and its religious communities, plays a decisive role in the exercise of the Marianist mission, we are all convinced. And our tradition teaches us that we do not have to be a big group to have a big influence. It is enough only that all the members be committed, after a community discernment that allows each one to find his place in the mission of the Unit. The comments of the Assistants are unequivocal.

- a) The entire religious community must be involved in the Unit mission. We, Marianist Religious, have the responsibility and the obligation to transmit, with our words and our witness, the evangelizing and humanizing meaning of the education inspired by our Founder. Community discernment must be pursued until each brother finds his place in the mission.*
- b) Regardless of our age and situation, the community can continue to be the pillar of the work in striving towards the multiplication of multipliers, that is, in forming those who must train our young people. The religious who are still active must be able to count on the support of the other members of the community, even when the latter no longer work in the school.*
- c) The community must be visible, open, accessible, and must give witness. Joy, optimism and joyful commitment should not be lacking. (“See how they love each other”!)*

The Unit's Office of Education must also fully assume its responsibility alongside the religious, the communities, and the works, in order to help them recognize and adopt the priorities.

- d) *By acting jointly with the Office of Zeal, the Office of Education must accompany the formation of both religious and laity who work with us. To have good educators in faith, we must be good formators of faith.*
- e) *We must follow the labor that is done in the works to prepare and really facilitate access to Faith for the people who are involved in our works. They must have spaces and places that facilitate their meeting with the Lord and directors and teachers to accompany and help them to appropriate and embody our Marianist educational tradition.*
- f) *The parish is also a space for education. This is a “non-formal” work of education since it is not an educational structure in accordance with governmental laws, but it is an educational structure according to the Church. And as such, it is necessary that the Assistant for Education influence everything that is done there in this respect; and this also applies to other “non-formal” works of education where his influence should not be lacking.*

## **2. The Functioning of Our Educational Works.**

The works of the Society of Mary are becoming ever larger and more complex, welcoming thousands of students and employing hundreds of educators. And like other such institutions, they are under unprecedented pressures, requiring attention, time, energy and enormous resources. Carried away by the concern to do well and the obligation of attaining academic results that draw the attention of more parents and students, we run obviously the risk of forgetting the *raison d'être* of these works. That is why it is important to recall periodically the priorities to be kept in mind. In their functioning, our works must be and remain:

- a) **Places of integral formation offered to all**, in order to "develop all the human, intellectual, spiritual, professional and moral capacities of the pupils, of the local community and also of the laity (administrators, teachers and service staff). Since we invite the laity to collaborate in our mission, we should also be concerned with providing them with the formation they need to understand and contribute to this mission."
- b) **Places of evangelization and education in Faith:** "Everything we do there must be evangelizing". Moreover, we must have well organized and sequenced pastoral offerings with strong experiences of encounter with Christ, thus transforming our pastoral ministry into a distinctive sign, since it allows the Formation in Faith in conformity with the project of our educational centers.

- c) **Places of shared mission** that promote and integrate individuals and groups (religious and lay) who are called to participate in the same evangelizing project, which "translates, *inter alia*, into the atmosphere of the institution, open to each and every one, whatever his condition, so that even teachers who are not Christians can find themselves at home."
- d) **Places of "awareness raising"** by *insisting*, time and time again, that our own Marianist identity be always perceptible and well lived at the heart of our works, both by the directors and by the teachers, as well as by the rest of the educational community; places to *continue* to work towards the integration of Faith and Curriculum; and places for *implementing* projects of education to interiority which are an indispensable prerequisite for evangelizing.

### 3. **"Non-formal" Works of Education.**

Speaking of "non-formal" works, in their limited sense (cf. I.3.a), which includes only social centers, vocational and technical centers, foundations, etc... (not including spiritual works: parishes, shrines, etc.) the participants recognized a reality that is increasingly present in the mission of the Units. A general consensus emerged among the Unit Assistants for Education that, today, these works represent an important dimension of our mission and that they must find their place in the missionary projects of our Units.

- a) This type of work has two specific characteristics which are reflected in their goals and challenges:
  - **Their Goals.** In addition to contributing to the "raising up of the lowly," as Mary sings in her *Magnificat*, these works constitute a *"call to evangelize in a different way, reaching out to the poor, to unschooled children and youth to work for their social integration. Moreover, these works are sources for renewal of our Religious Life, which help us to go beyond ourselves and get outside our own comfort zone.*
  - **Their challenges.** *The labor in these works is demanding and difficult; it requires energy and sometimes specialized training for the interveners before the works manage to occupy a privileged place in the mission of the Unit. These works are expensive, and are usually not very viable from the economic point of view because of their nature, being oriented towards the service of needy people.*
- b) These works must be included with the other Marianist works, finding "their place in the mission of the Units ... because of their size and urgency." And as one participant expressed it, *even though our Unit is only engaged in formal education, it seeks to reflect on how to use the structures of our schools to participate in the work of transformation of society. In fact, we are engaged in many non-formal activities throughout the year, with our pupils who are sensitized on the issues of Justice, Peace and Solidarity.*

The functioning of this category of works must follow the same requirements as the other works of the Unit. There is no reason why they should not also be a **community mission** and places for **incarnation** and **formation**, as the following comments of the participants explicitly attest.

- *An individual, acting alone, might confront the reality of poverty in his experience. Yet, it is essential that his intuitions related to a given situation be subject to the discernment of his community and of the Unit, so that one's individual activities may be accepted and valued by all. There should never be any personal stakes in the motive for the mission of a community or a Unit.*
- *Christ, despite his divine condition, has stripped himself of his rank, made himself one of us ... Poor alongside the poor. These works are places of true encounters with Christ. They make us better.*
- *In addition to services rendered to the poor, the Unit should also apply to them its formation and pastoral programs, lest these works become a simple NGO.*

#### **4. International Collaboration among SM Educational Works**

The interest and motives already presented above are all valid and could be repeated here. The participants' comments are very relevant and worth mentioning.

- *It is not a question of collaborating just for itself, but, if we are to innovate like Father Chaminade, we know that a culture of inclusive collaboration is the path that leads to innovation that responds to the real and concrete problems we face, both locally and internationally, in education.*
- *The Marianist world is graced with many talents. We need to take advantage of that. We can import and export what is successful. It is the fruit of much work, in keeping with our identity.*
- *The great subject of today is the Marianist identity in our works. This is what distinguishes us and which will make us last over time. We must also realize that this is true on the international level.*
- *It would be good to have clear organization, with statutes and officers and create a basis for reference. Without clear organization structures, we do not move forward, but just go around in circles.*

- *Zonal leaders must meet to ensure that the proposed steps are thoroughly explored: support for collaboration, definition of a relationship model, formation programs and means of activating the network.*

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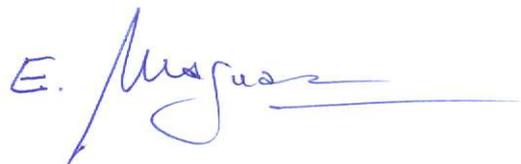
## CONCLUSION

This is my interpretation of the topics touched upon during our meeting. I am aware that there were many other aspects that should be developed and deepened. I leave this work to the Assistants for Education in the Units, whom I encourage to continue working with you, on the basis of concrete initiatives that the outcomes of this meeting have made possible initiate. This will allow everyone to become aware of and fully commit to all the implications of our Marianist mission today.

In 200 years of history, our style, dimensions and animation have changed as much in the works as in our communities. The same can even be said for our system of governance in *Three Offices*, and therefore for the Office of Education. But the principles remain. These changes are normal. They are part of our tradition, and they are desirable for the continuation of our effective missionary activity, given new contexts and new situations. Each leader has a key role to play in this area.

I wish all those who are beginning a new academic year a good start, and a good end of the year for those who are heading towards the closing of the year's academic activities. May all of you feel the closeness of our Mother accompanying you on this journey, and may the hand of the Lord bless the efforts of all!

Essodomna Maximin Magnan, SM

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Magnan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Assistant General for Education