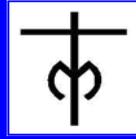


# Vocsm



No. 1  
APRIL 2009

## A VOCATION BULLETIN

### WHY ?



*A new bulletin...another one? Why?*

*As an act of optimism: we wish to "give thanks to God, because even today he continues to call together workers into his vineyard" (Benedict XVI).*

*If he calls, we must cooperate, open eyes and hearts; our own, those of our collaborators, those of youth. We must set another place, open the doors of our community, that of the chapel and that of the community room. We must take the time, be available, attentive and creative, ...*

*In this bulletin (to appear three times yearly) you will find:*

- elements for reflection or prayer
- accounts of initiatives undertaken in SM and sometimes elsewhere
- presentation of a vocation ministry project of one of our Units (in this issue, the United States)
- references to documents or websites that might help you

*Vocation ministry is not a problem, it is an opportunity! Let's all be active in it!*

*André Fétis, SM*

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### Next issue: October 2009

*Please do not hesitate to send me news and photos of your activities, suggestions of texts, of documents, of websites.... This bulletin is yours, ours. Thank you!*  
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## MESSAGE OF POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

3 MAY 2009, FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Theme: *Faith in the divine initiative - the human response*

I want to invite all the People of God to reflect on : *Faith in the divine initiative - the human response.*

"Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (Mt 9:38) has a constant resonance in the Church. Pray! The urgent call of the Lord stresses that prayer for vocations should be continuous and trusting.

Let us give thanks to God, because even today he continues to call together workers into his vineyard.

Our first duty, therefore, is to keep alive in families and in parishes, in movements and in apostolic associations, in religious communities and in all the sectors of diocesan life this appeal to the divine initiative with unceasing prayer. We must pray that the whole Christian people grows in its trust in God, convinced that the "Lord of the harvest" does not cease to ask some to place their entire existence freely at his service so as to work with him more closely in the mission of salvation.

An emblematic human response, full of trust in God's initiative, is the generous and unmitigated "Amen" of the Virgin of Nazareth, uttered with humble and decisive adherence to the plan of the Most High.

Mary, after this first "fiat", had to repeat it many times, even up to the culminating moment of the crucifixion of Jesus

And it was from the cross, that Jesus, while dying, gave her to us as Mother and entrusted us to her as sons and daughters (cf. Jn 19:26-27).

I want to entrust to her all those who are aware of God's call to set out on the road of the ministerial priesthood or consecrated life.

Dear friends, do not become discouraged in the face of difficulties and doubts; trust in God and follow Jesus faithfully and you will be witnesses of the joy that flows from intimate union with him. Imitating the Virgin Mary whom all generations proclaim as blessed because she believed (cf. Lk 1:48), commit yourselves with every spiritual energy, to realize the heavenly Father's plan of salvation. (...)

## **WITNESS: An interview with Charles Johnson, SM**

### *In charge of Vocation Ministry, Province of the United States of America*



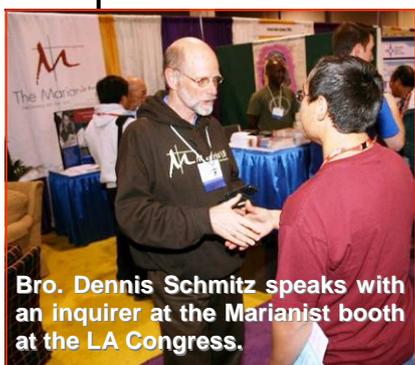
**Charles Johnson, SM**

#### **Would you introduce yourself in a few words?**

Charles Johnson, S.M.

- Born in 1960
- From: Philadelphia, Pa.
- First vows: 1987
- Perpetual Vows: 1990
- Teacher and High School Administrator

**When and how did you begin your work in the Province vocation office?** I became the national vocation director in 2002 when the Marianist Province of the United States was formed. I was directed to establish a national vocation office and help create a "vocation culture" within the new Province.



**Bro. Dennis Schmitz speaks with an inquirer at the Marianist booth at the LA Congress.**

**What are the primary goals of your work?** I deal mainly with vocations in the U.S. but have worked with the Brothers in both Mexico and Ireland. Brian Halderman, S.M. has been very instrumental in setting up our web site as well as the sites for Mexico and Ireland.

**And today, what do you consider the most important aspects of vocation recruitment?** I see my job divided into three main parts:

1. The business part: advertising, budgets etc...;
2. Walking and journeying with young men as they discern their call from God and the possibility of a vocation with the Society of Mary;
3. Working, encouraging and reminding the Province membership that "vocation ministry" is everyone's responsibility.

We have 23 members in our Contact Program and four Aspirants at the present time. We may be blessed with six Aspirants for next year.

**How are the Vocation Offices organized?** We have four vocation offices throughout the Province. There is one at each university: University of Dayton, St. Mary's in San Antonio, Chaminade University of Honolulu; and the national office in St. Louis. I am the only full-time vocation person, but I have an excellent team of 12 people who work part-time in vocation ministry. The vocation teams serve as guides for inquirers (possible candidates) and I work with them after we have started a "discernment" relationship with the individual.



**Annual contact retreat included a visit to the United Nations**



**In March, the Stonemill-Kiefaber community in Dayton hosted a "live-in" experience for three University of Dayton students.**

**What links do the Vocation Offices have with youth work?** At the present time, we receive the most inquiries from our universities, the Province vocation web site, the LA Congress (an annual meeting for religious educators held in the Los Angeles area) and referrals from other religious or former Marianists.

**Can you describe some successes of recent years?** We have been blessed with several gifted young men who want to be Marianists. They want to share our life and charism.

**What is helpful to you as Director of this work?** The Council, Chapter and the membership in general have been very supportive of our vocation efforts. I am also supported in our ministry by a very fine and talented Province Communication Office.



Bro. Charles, national vocation director, makes a presentation to grade school children.

### What materials or aids does the Province use for vocation work?

Advertising: The Internet and the web site is very important for our vocation ministry. Our vocation web page places "us" where we are not geographically. Young Americans do not read diocesan newspapers, they use the internet. So, we advertise on the internet. It has been a good tool for us, and it is much cheaper than print advertising.

Discernment retreats, live-in experiences and invitations to community Eucharist and dinner are ways we invite young men to discern with us.

I work directly with the FMI and indirectly at times with the lay branch. (An area I can improve in).

It is important to communicate and keep the membership informed of our vocation efforts. We send out a Vocation Newsletter every six weeks or so

and also send our Vocation Notation, a weekly electronic weekly message sent out to all members of the Province. We all need to invite others to share in our life. We need to recall that vocation ministry is not just my job, not just the job of the vocation team, but the job of the entire Province membership. We try to keep "vocation ministry" in the forefront of everyone's mind. When I travel around the Province and speak to communities, I tell the Brothers that my job (not me) is the most important in the Province because I deal with the future. We need new members with new ideas to help share our charism in the future. I am very hopeful about the future, but it is a realistic hope. Our future is up to us and in our own hands. We need to invite and share the passion of the Founder with the younger generations.



The retreatants gather for Evening song at a discernment retreat in San Fernando, California.

### What message of encouragement would you like to send to the Society about vocation work?

#### Six Points to Ponder (Things that I have learned these past seven years)

- *God is involved in all of this vocation ministry:* We are not asking people to join a club but rather a way of life. Vocation discernment is sometimes a mystery, and I need to recall that no matter what I do or not do, God is involved.
- *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate:* Keep vocation ministry and a vocation culture in the minds of the Province membership.
- *Accept the Province membership:* We are who we are, with both our gifts and limitations.



The Trinity Avenue community in Dayton hosted a "live-in" vocation discernment experience in March for four University of Dayton students. In addition to prayer, discussion and meals, the group gathered for a dominoes tournament.

- *Support of Province Leadership:* The Council and the Chapter have been very

supportive in our vocation efforts.

- *Committed Vocation Team:* I have a fine team (who all have other jobs) that works very hard in the "trenches" of vocation ministry.
- *Passion:* We need to be on "fire" with the charism! We have young men who do not have to be Marianists, rather they want to be Marianists.

If we believe that we have something good (the charism), then we need to invite and share our lives with others!



Members of a student Marianist community at the University of Dayton recently joined the Chambers Street community for dinner.

**Thank you very much Bro. Charles and much success in your work!**

# IN BRIEF...



**CHILE:** *First meeting of today's leaders of Chile.* The first meeting took place January 6-7-8 at the Residencia Universitaria Cardenal Caro (RUCC), in Santiago. Participants were young people between the ages of 14 and 25, active in one of the works, institutions or movements of the Marianist Family.

**Why did we have this meeting?** We wanted to organize this meeting because of the need to have young men and women capable of effectively leading their groups, promoting the vocation of service to their country and to their Church. We want the Marianist world to multiply young men and women with the ability to serve and to welcome "the other."  
**What were the objectives of the Meeting?** For young people to discover their vocation to be leaders. – To recognize their potential to be leaders, strengthening and developing their leadership ability. – To present models of leadership. – To commit to putting their leadership ability at the service of others. *(Boletín Fundación Chaminade – N°6 – Marzo 2009)*

**Burkina Faso:** For five years now a small group of religious from the **Ivory Coast** have been conducting a vocation ministry in Burkina Faso near to where the forebears of several religions originated. Twice yearly they visit cities (Ouagadougou, Bobodioulasso, to mention only the most important). Next July there will be a 5-day camp with the current young candidates (27 contacts). During the year these young people are followed up by mail and by a local collaborator (religious or priest). One of these youths is currently in the novitiate in Abidjan.



Candidates from Burkina Faso with Bro. Elisée Pooda (far left), Georges Gbeze (back) and François Nanan (far right)



**ARGENTINA:** "Project Severiano." The Province is working to put in place a project for volunteer work and social engagement for youth. Fr. Severiano Ayastuy is the inspirational model.

His memory remains alive where he worked, in Comandancia Frías, a social center recently inaugurated bears his name...

**More news in the next issue of Vocsm. .**

**MERIBAH:** The website of the Province has recently been renovated. It includes a page presenting vocation ministry and the program of formation of the Society of Mary. Go to:



[http://www.provinceofmeribah.org/The\\_Province\\_of\\_Meribah/Vocations.html](http://www.provinceofmeribah.org/The_Province_of_Meribah/Vocations.html)

**Is there a page of reflection on vocations on the website of your Province or on that of the activity in which you work?**

**Next issue: October 2009**

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**Father Chaminade makes a pastoral visit....**

**MADRID AND SARAGOSSA:** Father Chaminade has always involved himself in ministry to children and young people, and so he came to give them inspiration in several institutions of the Province of Madrid, as well as at the Colegio del Pilar in Saragossa.

He told them about his life, his love for Mary and urged them to follow his example.



He also had a conversation with his successor, who happened to be passing through



Saragossa at the same time....

What they said to each other was not passed on to us...

