



A MARIANIST COMMUNITY THAT CALLS FORTH?

We are all aware that community is an essential element in all vocation ministry. That is the topic I would like to reflect upon today, since many persons might ask themselves: what can I do for vocations? Let's begin, each one of us, but taking a look at our community: it is through that means that I make more understandable and credible the call that God has placed at the heart of our lives.

I would like to base myself on one striking example, that of the foundation of the ecumenical community of Taizé in 1940 by Bro. Roger Schütz, a Swiss Lutheran. Bro. Roger's successor, Bro. Alois, writes:

In his youth, in the midst of World War II, Bro. Roger thought that starting a community of a few men might be a small sign of peace and reconciliation in a Europe torn apart by violence. He wanted to prepare already for what would be happening after the war. The vocation that he proposed to the brothers who came to join him was to constitute what he called a "parable of communion," a "parable of community."

That community was the sign of communion willed by God in a time of separations. That sign has been so eloquent that today the community that was founded in an isolated village welcomes throughout the year hundreds of thousands of young persons who come to discover Christ in prayer and in the experience of fraternity.

For us Marianist religious, what is the "parable of community" that Father Chaminade bequeathed to us and how can we make our community life express it and call others to it? Our Rule invites us to maintain three fundamental elements.

1. The Marianist community lives and calls to fraternity. The Marianist community is a "new family, based upon the gospel" (RL 35). It cannot be built solely upon its own resources: "It is Christ, present among us, who gives inspiration and strength to community life and makes it a sign to those around us" (37). "We give ourselves to community life in order to bear witness to God's love" (34).

2. The Marianist community is a household of a contagious faith. Prayer, celebration, the Word of God, the spiritual life, all are the foundations of its existence. The community builds itself thereon and shows who is at the center of its life. The community represents these essential dimensions of the human vocation.



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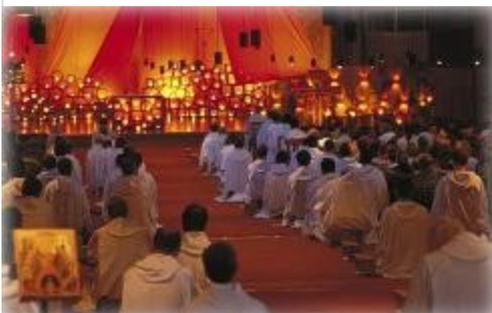
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3. The Marianist community is a focus of missionary outreach. The community is by its very nature open, like that of Jerusalem. "We are happy to welcome those who live around us to share our faith, friendship, and hospitality. In this way, we seek to penetrate our time and place with the spirit of the gospel" (RL 43). It is "itself a primary instrument to fulfill our mission. We know that the quality of our life has greater impact than our words" (RL 67); It is also the center of discernment and unification of the mission: it "supports, guides, and evaluates the work of each member" (RL 68). Its preferred means of sharing our charism is the establishment and development of other communities around it (RL 5.5-6), beginning with those of the Marianist Family.



MARIANIST BROTHERS FROM IVORY COAST

Strengthening each of these elements is to make our communities inviting to people, because they then express who we are, the *raison d'être* of the Marianist vocation, and thereby allow God's call to be manifested through them. So this means is very simple and very necessary for helping to make God's summons more legible to the eyes of those around us. If we live out these various calls of our vocations, we can then more easily appeal to others to help us build fraternal communities that are fervent missionaries along the lines of Father Chaminade's inspired vision. In the eyes of the world, only a young, strong, powerful community can be appealing; but we know that in God's eyes that is not the most important thing: the attractive community is that which is according to his heart and which lives out his will. Are we convinced of that?



GYAN DEEP COMMUNITY—RANCHI (INDIA)

Mary always knew how to translate her faith into action and she is the woman of the Incarnation. With her, we can find the concrete means for putting these three calls into action. The testimonies that we are receiving from Ecuador and Japan, as a follow-up to this reflection, both show a strong community dimension. They can help our reflections also.

P. André Fétis, sm — Assistant general for Religious Life

PATHS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND VOCATIONAL REFLECTION IN JAPAN

In an extremely secularized society with a very small number of Catholics, our brothers and sisters in Japan perseveringly offer to their young alumni spaces for deepening their faith and reflecting upon their vocation. They describe for us how that project has gradually affected the life of the young people, but also that of the brothers and sisters who accompany them. Thus the ones and the others now feel better prepared to welcome God's call. May we let ourselves be challenged by this beautiful testimony.

We invited the 2012 graduates of the Marianist schools in Japan (4 SM – 1 FMI) when we began the youth meditation meetings. Later, with the graduates as the primary element, we began the "Youth Encounters," which we have described in VocSM No. 10. This time we will speak about the further development of these meetings.

The first participants in the "Youth Encounters" begun in April 2012 included 4-5 young persons (male and female) together spreading the word, especially among our graduates. The boys were mostly graduates, the girls included some who had participated in the "Prayer Meeting" that was held in Tokyo and were university undergraduates and graduate students and working girls.

At the beginning, we started with a presentation on the Society of Mary, on the basis of the 6 booklets about Father Chaminade which were written and published for the occasion of the celebration of his beatification. It was a theme that met their expectations, since many participants already had connections with the Marianists, but did

not know exactly what we were all about. Once we talked about Father Chaminade, who had asked young people to bring others into their circle when attending the next meeting; in the same way, making liberal use of typical youth networking with modern methods, they contacted graduates, acquaintances, friends, and the number of participants increased.



Considering that most of the graduates of the Marianist schools who participated in several meetings and that the number of participants has grown whom we might consider "youth who have begun a relationship with the Marianists," the Marianist character of the project has been strengthened. We have received several testimonies from the participants saying how they have experienced an unusual feeling of peace. The young people themselves, when they became conscious of that, decided to try to take notes on it in order to underline the Marianist character of these meetings which, fundamentally, are meetings of young Marianists. They have undertaken a commitment and we have gradually entrusted the running of the meetings to them independently. The young people proposed giving a name to this "Youth Encounter"; from among the many opinions expressed, they settled upon the name of "Foyer."

"Foyer" is the image of a place where people gather, a place "of light, with a big fire inside, a family setting."

So that it would be possible to say that the name shows the essence of the group, Foyer is for the various young people a place that is open for getting together; up until now there has been a certain turnover among the participants, but, normally the participants in Foyer number about 14-15. They started with the presentation and the space prepared by the Marianists, but gradually they have come to select the topics, taken responsibility, prepared the materials, etc. The same youths have stabilized the current meaning of "Foyer" and continue on today. Following the Foyer meetings, we organized meals with the Marianist leaders, so that it became a very pleasant opportunity to get to know one another better.



Periodically, outside the meetings, the youth organize outings which are sometimes pilgrimages, sometimes recreational affairs; some get together at times just by themselves in the meeting room. In addition, they have become committed to the Vietnamese aspirants who are now in the Society of Mary; they have taken on the responsibility of helping them in the study of the Japanese language, and there are various and diversified occasions for getting to know them. Then too, among the baptized members, some are entrusting themselves to the divine call and following that path of discernment (unfortunately it has not yet been the path that leads to

the Marianists), some are oriented towards the priesthood in the future, some, still in Catholic and Marianist schools, are searching hesitantly; there are some persons who have come to the end of their search, some are at the level of wanting to be baptized in the near future. It is said that "Foyer has a touch of something different from a usual gathering of young people," but there is also the personal attractiveness of the participants in the Foyer.



Some years having gone by since the beginning of the "Youth Encounters," and then "Foyer," many of the participants who were at the beginning of the foundation and project have become adults. There was a new meeting in April 2015 with the young people who had begun to bring in the newest members and young participants who had come for the first time. Among the new members there were not only young people, but also, because of Marianist personnel changes, some FMI sisters.



With the four Vietnamese candidates

Since April 2015, with the intent of deepening everyone's religious faith, we in "Foyer" are using *Youth Catechism*. We have read it together and after sharing, we have settled upon some central, fundamental topics. Among the Marianists who have participated in "Foyer," our comments have been quite positive: "we are amazed that it has begun to develop into such a wonderful youth group," "the young people have seen individuals who are seriously seeking to live their faith and they have been encouraged by that," etc. Also for us, the familiarity which we have with the young people whom we meet in Foyer has become a strong stimulus and source of hope.

In connection with the vocational activities, we have accompanied the young people on a journey together: this can create links with a concrete deepening of their vocation; there is a probable hope for expanding to other people beyond, to increase "vocations" in a broader sense. To put it clearly, if you think how the founders of these meetings have made a practice of developing relationships with young people in the sense of a training for Christians, it is certainly a valuable service of the Marianists, the fulfillment of an important mission. These young people have made their religious faith a main focus of their lives, deepening their knowledge of and commitment to Christ, assuming a role in the mission of Christ. They have responded to the "vocation" of each; I think that there can be no vocational activity deeper than that, if they come to feel that, as Christians, they are concretely living out a mission



The Marianists have been present in Japan for 127 years, but to continue this mission and presence with new meaning in today's Japan, we want Foyer to continue to grow as a part of the Marianist service. God willing, from the Foyer members, the youth section of the MLC and future generations of MLC, some high-profile members will accept responsibility. We pray that this happens and, as should be a natural outcome, we pray that it become a help in raising up Marianist vocations.

Fr. TAKADA Hirokazu Andrea, SM

QUININDÉ (Ecuador) **a promising Marianist presence**

How to work at vocation ministry as Marianist Family? The example described, in Ecuador, is a beautiful illustration of how to do it. May it be an inspiration for us!

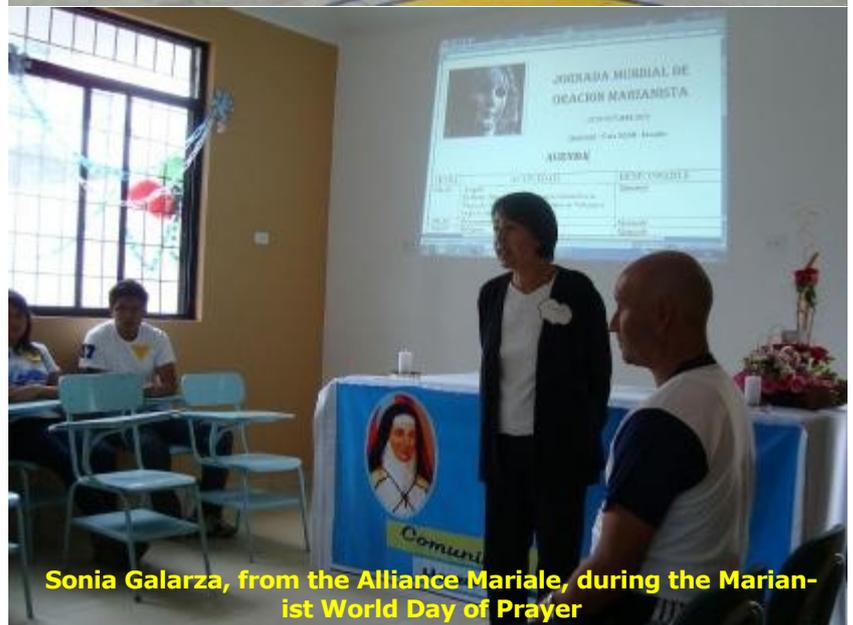
QUININDÉ is a Pacific coastal city, nestled in the Department of Esmeraldas, in the northwest of Ecuador. Its people are happy, extraverted, mestizos... real coastal types!

Our Italian Marianist sisters arrived in Quinindé in 1987 and remained there until 2007 -- twenty years of an intense and fervent pastoral ministry, both in education and in parish work, in the city center and in the rural suburbs. The initial group were all Italians, but later they were joined by the first two Ecuadorian Sisters.

But the most wonderful thing about this generous Marianist presence, admired by the entire local population, was how good was the seed sown by our sisters, the greater part of which fell on good and fertile ground. The proof of that is the existence of a wide-ranging and enthusiastic lay Marianist fraternity, the presence of a group of adult women who live according to the spirit of the Alliance Mariale, and the flourishing of Marianist vocations: The FMI have one perpetual professed, Marta, today in Chile, and one novice, Gisela, in the novitiate in Bogotá. The SM were happy to have the presence of one novice, Diego Muñoz, in the Latin American Novitiate of Santiago de Chile, but from which he has just unfortunately departed, and one prenovice, Miguel Ángel, in the Prenovitiate of Medellín. These vocations – and those still to come – have been enveloped with warmth and enthusiasm by the Marianist laity of Quinindé.



MLC members and the Marianist Family Center of Quinindé



Sonia Galarza, from the Alliance Mariale, during the Marianist World Day of Prayer

The Marianist brothers and sisters of Latacunga, as well as the perpetual professed of the Alliance Mariale in Quito, take advantage of all possible trips to Quinindé (some four hours driving time) to accompany the Marianist movement there. At present there is a Marianist house in Quinindé that little by little is being fixed up to serve as a retreat house and gathering place in the region, as well as a meeting place for the fraternity and the Marianist movement. The local parish priests are very appreciative of the pastoral collaboration of the lay Marianists in catechesis, liturgy, youth ministry, etc.



Celebration of the Marianist World Day of Prayer

Once more, the Marianist presence in Quinindé, its leadership and organization, are responding to the prophetic vision of our Founders and to the trust which, from our very beginnings, they placed in the laity.

Fr. Cecilio de Lora, SM

WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE, AT THE « CENTRO DE CONVIVENCIAS », THE MARIANIST SISTERS AND FR. BRUNO GALAS, SM

