



MARCH 25, 2021 - ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

PATRONAL FEAST OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY

- Prepared by the Marianist Lay Communities -

Dear Family,

Each year, our Marianist Family is called to remember and celebrate with joy our vocation in the Church. We base our living response in the "YES" of Mary at the time of the Annunciation. Mary shows us at that moment that her yes is definitive, not because it is said once and for all, but because it comes from the depths of her being and that it engages her completely. This yes is the affirmation of absolute confidence in what is presented and in what will happen, including the unknown and therefore the uncertainty. Mary's definitive yes is this yes which will never call into question her presence and her action at each moment of Jesus' life, from childbirth until the cross, passing through all the stages of the public life of her Son. This yes will lead her into the adventure of the Cenacle to calm the troubled hearts of the Apostles when Jesus leaves an apparent void. Mary's yes will fulfill their expectations, their desire, their hope, because it has the strength of a tested yes, strengthened and consolidated by its unflinching fidelity. It allows the confident expectation of another presence and is the glue of the first Church. That "yes" of Mary can be ours. It is a yes to Jesus, to his life in us and in the world. It is the yes to life stronger than death. It is the yes to the Resurrection. It is the yes to our salvation.

In this period of pandemic, each of us has had to say "forced" yeses, imposed to preserve our own health and that of our brothers and sisters. We each had to suddenly agree to limits on our individual and collective freedoms. But our slow acceptances were rooted in a first and solid yes: the YES of Mary. It helps us to consent to rapidly changing events by maintaining an attitude firmly attached to trust and surrender. Her yes, which is then also ours, sometimes makes the unacceptable acceptable and the impossible possible.

In the Marianist Family, the YES of Mary is most certainly ours. This is what the Blesseds William - Joseph Chaminade and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon wanted for each of us.

What if this Patronal Feast of the year 2021 gave us the opportunity to measure how we live the "yes" of Mary in our life during these months of the health crisis?

Mary allowed herself to be approached at a time which represented a starting point in the possible realization of the work of God in her. It is possible to imagine the force of her yes in a heart in turmoil, uncertain and trembling, but also exalted with an inexplicable joy ... that of having said "yes"! What if we come back to the memory of that foundational moment of our own life when we said "yes" to the Lord's call to give our life to him, in response to our own vocation, in the Marianist Family? Why not still today taste the joy of the slightly crazy yes we said, certain that it would bring us the happiness we hoped for and the fullness of our hearts. Let us allow ourselves to be drawn into the wake of that yes we pronounced one day, and which now forever guides our desires, our choices, our actions. Let the memory of the "yes" we pronounced one day restore the strength and vigor of our beginnings which carry in them a bit of nonchalance and of great availability for the unknown.



The YES from the beginning



The YES of everyday life

Mary was aware that her yes would take her to unexplored and totally unexpected horizons with Jesus. She committed herself to that, and she accompanied Jesus in her own way: with discretion, firmness and constancy in her presence. The stages of the life of Jesus were also stages for her, starting from her own feelings and her own field of possibility. She thus achieved what nobody had ever done: raising Jesus, accompanying him on the roads of his public life and in his encounters. This fidelity to everyday events is also ours. It is the yes to our life that unfolds day after day, through our family, professional, community, and missionary life. It is yes to small things ... also to big ones! It is the yes to life, offered constantly in everything that presents itself. What is our yes to events? How did we welcome them or how did we resist? What have they taught us about ourselves, our vocation, our mission? Do these yeses repeated throughout our daily lives reflect a bigger, deeper, more authentic yes as a fundamental attitude of our hearts? What joy does fidelity to our daily lives bring us, whether we are consecrated lay persons, laity, or religious?

The "yes" of Mary shows us that God did not spare her pain. At Calvary, it was the same paroxysm of suffering that Mary experienced in her being and her flesh. She saw and lived the crucifixion of her own son. Through that suffering, she had to see in it the will of God and the salvation of all mankind. What about our suffering, that of having lost a loved one during this pandemic? Can we associate it with that "yes" of Mary who accepted that it was the suffering throughout her life that gave it meaning? Paul Claudel said that God did not come to spare us suffering, but to fill it with his presence. What if Mary's "yes" throughout her life allowed us to say "yes" throughout our life to its end? Thanks to Mary's "yes" at the foot of the Cross, we are called in the Marianist Family to accompany our suffering brothers and sisters humanely and spiritually. What field of mission can this lead us to? With whom? To whom?



The YES of suffering

In the Cenacle Mary knew that death did not have the last word. That certainty led her to comfort the Apostles with her presence and her word of hope. Mary was charged with such a spectacular message: death is conquered! Life is stronger than death! And this despite appearances which are so often deceptive. This global health crisis presents us with deadly, anxiety-provoking, and let's say confusing, appearances. Our misunderstandings and our limits are those of the Apostles and the disciples of Emmaus after the death of Jesus. We need to find the meaning of our life, of our history. The "yes" of Mary is the yes to life. Thanks to her and with her, it is a yes to our life in today's world, filled with a vision of life, of faith, of hope, and of promise. Our faith in the Resurrection gives us the certainty, with Mary, that the COVID-19 that sometimes announces death will be overcome, and that life always wins. So, we who belong to the Marianist Family, what message of hope can we address to one another and address to the world? What vision of the world do we want to share? With what convictions? Do we want to be bearers of hope, of life? How can we support each other, brothers and sisters of the Family?



YES to life !

True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, "the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. [...] Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more, the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another."¹

Let us leave room today for prayer, for the contemplation of the Mystery of the Annunciation. Let us observe this icon of the Annunciation of Oustioug with an attentive glance, to imbue us with the gestures, the glances, the attitudes represented here. Let us say, in prayer, what touches us and challenges us...



¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 32

The Gospel according to Saint Luke

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Let's end our prayer with intentions

- Give thanks for our Marianist vocation in the Church
- Give thanks for the dynamism of our Family Councils
- Ask the Lord for new vocations in our spiritual family.

PRAYER

Virgin Mary, full of grace,
Handmaid of the Lord and of his Kingdom,
I believe with the whole Church
that you are the mother of God,
the mother of the living and my mother.
To live my Baptism,
I have made a covenant with you, in the service of your Son Jesus.
I thank you for guiding me and bringing me to this day.
I want to renew my commitment today.
Keep me from harm, make me more docile to the Holy Spirit,
may my life be more faithful to the Gospel,
that your Church might grow,
bearer of the Good News of Love for all humanity
With all the Marianiste Family,
I want to live committed to you
and contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel
in this world of our time, without shouting and with confidence,
seeking to do whatever Jesus tells me.
May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all
places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.
Amen