

# March 25, 2022 - ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD PATRONAL FEAST OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY



Prepared by the FMI



Dear Family,

We invite you to our annual meeting as a family of Mary to celebrate and give thanks together for the gift of our vocation.

We live in times of challenges and pain, but we want, with Mary and like her, to welcome what is to come, inspired and sustained by her confident and persevering "yes." A "yes" that, accepted in simplicity, made it possible to conceive and engender something new through the power of the Spirit.

In July 2022, the Marianist Sisters will celebrate our 33rd General Chapter, for which we have chosen as our theme: *Missionaries of Mary in the care of life*. We want to join the call of the Church and of so many people of good will and take concrete steps towards an integral ecology.

Pope Francis calls us to develop a "loving awareness" of this home we share and to act on the values in which we believe (LS 220). Within this framework, we propose to you to deepen your knowledge on "essential care". And for that we use some intuitions from the book by Luis Aranguren

Gonzalo: *"This is our moment in time. The paradigm of care as an educational challenge."*<sup>1</sup>

We will do so against the backdrop of the text of the Lord's Annunciation. Pregnancy and gestation require continuous attention and care from the mother and the whole family. In the same way, we, as missionaries of Mary, want to support her in the mission of engendering and guarding the new life that beats silently in the heart of our humanity, so wounded at this moment by the context of the pandemic and many other factors.

Each locality will be able to creatively organize its own celebration in the form of a meeting, shared meditation, retreat, Eucharist, rosary, etc. Below, we offer you the material with some guidelines for reflecting and praying together.

## 1. Essential care

One of the important things the pandemic is teaching us is the value of caring. Let us recall the words of Leonardo Boff: *"caring is not an option, we learn to care or we perish. When we love we care and when we care we love (...), care constitutes the central category of the new paradigm of civilization that is trying to emerge throughout the world (...) Care assumes a dual function of prevention of future harm and regeneration of past harm."*

"We have the genetic endowment to survive the pandemic, but if we do not change our behavior towards the planet and each other, it will be very difficult for us to survive" (Bernardo Toro). This is also the continuous insistence of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* and in *Fratelli tutti*.

We live in a world where not everything is predictable and calculable. Our ignorance has to do with our inability to understand a world of interdependencies, with an excess of information and technological noise that has escaped our control and is growing without a parallel ethical development.

## 2. Recalling a bit of our world context

We are witnessing a climate crisis with unprecedented ecological collapse, migratory crises on the rise (approximately 272 million international migrants)<sup>2</sup>, increasing social inequalities, hate speech and false

<sup>1</sup> The book has been edited by the SM Foundation, 2020, Madrid and refers to a lot of interesting bibliography. Here I will not make references to pages and citations because it would make this text "heavy", whose proposal is rather prayerful. Surely this proposal has to be adapted for certain contexts.

dichotomies that today flood our mass media and social networks, millions of young people in Latin America - and other parts of the world - who find no other means for vital subsistence than drug trafficking, organized crime, human and arms trafficking, etc... But in this context, God surprises us, as he surprised Mary, and continues to speak and send us messengers.

At this very moment, Pope Francis calls us to a global pact, to dream and walk together as one humanity, to take care of each other and our common home. Are we willing to assume with full awareness and responsibility the challenge before us?

There will be no change as a civilization if there is no **personal spiritual leap** towards a self-understanding of life from the care we have received. It is impossible to change a dehumanized system without a profound change of consciousness. It is life itself and its capacity to make it habitable that asks us to find a new way to order reality and to integrate ourselves into it. And in that, we gain access through an inner leap that goes deeper, that is, a profound conversion.

(Suggestion: present photos or images of our global/local crisis context)

### 3. Remembering our first vocation: called to Life

GIVING and CARING are two basic human capabilities and tasks. Because giving and caring generate bonds with others and many bonds generate community. As missionaries of Mary, we are called to live and educate from that perspective. We are caregivers of life, who prolong this maternal mission of Mary today. This means and implies educating for the future of a global citizenship that we are all called to build together.



*Either we take care or we perish.* Care refers to all areas of our daily lives and includes economic and political development models as well as personal lifestyles and ways of living together. Caregiving becomes an educational emergency and a personal, relational and organizational challenge. This is because devastation, a clear sign of a culture of neglect and exploitation, is today a landscape that invites us to reinvent ourselves and recreate new ways of life that are more respectful of this earth of which we are not owners, but caretakers, because we belong to it.

(Suggestion: spontaneously ask for forgiveness for not responding to this vocation of being caregivers of life where we are).

### 4. The normality of carelessness

For a long time we have lived as though carelessness were normal without questioning or realizing it. The pandemic has intensified the legitimate desire to return to a normality that is anchored in the culture of encounter and that we desire to recover: affection, tenderness, hugs and bonds. It is also desirable to recover the normality of a life where basic needs are covered and not fall into the pit of social exclusion.

However, it is difficult for us to understand that it is precisely this other normality full of carelessness that has brought us to this current context. We have been dragged along by a normality where we have barely batted an eyelid in the face of increasing pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, or the waste of finite fossil resources such as coal, gas and oil. We yearn for a normality that strives to promote successful and excellent people, but who make their personal success a goal that is only reserved for the strongest. ***It seems that that normality was the problem and we did not realize it.*** We cannot return to that normality. We are immersed in a great civilizational crisis and we need to broaden our vision. This is our moment in time: let's be bold, brave and creative. Let us help each other to understand and order our reality in a different way so that

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<sup>2</sup> <https://news.un.org/es/story/2019/09/1462242> - UN News.

we can live in it as brothers and sisters. This is our opportunity to connect with the deepest part of ourselves and allow something new to emerge.

(Suggestion: pause for personal reflection - what is the priority and essential in our lives?)

A change of mentality and awareness is urgently needed. This is our moment in time. *There is a crack in everything. That is how the light enters.* The pandemic... that's the crack. In these difficult times, care emerges as a possibility for the future in which we allow new fertility to arise, whether in the personal sphere, in personal relationships, in organizations, in educational models or in the way we live as a species on the planet. Only through care can we put health resources at the service of all, move from competitiveness to collaboration, from the self to the we.

Perhaps the most effective vaccine is another way of living. But are we ready for it? The ethic of care drives a new way of living. Let us seek together the newness that is announced to us in our everyday situations. Let's help each other to rescue what is essential.

## 5. Contemplating some "mysteries" of life

(...having as a background the text of Lk 1: 26-38)

1. **Receptivity:** We are not the masters of life. Life is given to us, it is gifted to us. Our creativity is the response to the gift of living on this planet. We are the fruit of our activities and our passivities, that is, of the awareness of how much we have received. And what we have received is what allows us to mobilize.

Caring is more than a way of acting; it is the awareness of having been cared for throughout our history as a human species and as individual beings. Let us remember for a moment, all the care that has gone into making us here today: the care of our parents and family, our communities, our church, our teachers, etc. We can do a paraphrase: *I have been loved and cared for, therefore I am.*

Recognizing that we are welcomed, loved and cherished by the life unfolding in the universe, on Earth and in the family into which each of us was born is the first pillar of care. A pillar that reminds us how important it is to let ourselves act, to let ourselves be, to let all the receptivities that sustain us flow.

(Suggestion: pause to acknowledge and thank this mystery of receptivity without which we would not be here today. - "Thanks be to Life, which has given us so much"...).

2. **Necessary downsizing and sobriety:** The promises of *more, bigger, faster and farther* have led us to a dead end. Yesterday's sustainable growth is now giving way to the necessary downsizing. By this term we mean a political, economic, social and cultural project whose goal is that **to live better, producing and consuming less**. More is not necessarily better, and less (from the perspective of the rich West) is enough. Downsizing does not aim to lead us to impoverishing levels of production and consumption, but rather to restore the balances with the natural environment that industrialization, urbanization and human depredation have broken. It is a proposal that prioritizes life and the common good.



At a more global level, care rests on far-reaching economic and political decisions. At the local level, care is also at home in *a sober life in the way of living and consuming*. Sobriety is not scarcity, but satisfaction in living with enough. Living well with less. That means a revolution in our lifestyles. In some contexts, the opposite is true: people don't even have what they need to live. For this very reason, the experience of *a chosen sobriety*, lived in a happy and generous way, is a sign of care for oneself, for others and for the real situation in which we are living.

(Suggestion: reflect on what can I do personally to live this - "less is more"?)

3. **Interdependence:** Care comes to accompany us in this *network of relationships* and encounters of which we are a part. Not just encounters of persons. Biology, physics, astronomy and spirituality remind us that everything is interconnected. *Laudato Si'* speaks of the care of the common home and its transversal axis is **"everything is interconnected"**. All living things are related and, in the same way, so are peace, justice and the preservation of creation.



When I say "I", I cannot refer to a body isolated or separated from the rest. This self needs air, water, and other human beings to make its life. Therefore, interdependence forces us to think of a single world, a common project of humanity. This is the insistent call of *Fratelli tutti*.

(Suggestion: pause to **feel** the mystery of interdependence: do you feel part of this immense vital network, which generously and gratuitously keeps you alive at every moment?)

4. **Heartfelt reasoning:** We need to develop a warm and heartfelt reasoning, which emerges from within feeling and emotion. A type of reasoning that leaves room for not knowing, for uncertainty, for openness to listen to each other and to seek together the ways of the Lord, facilitating spaces of participation and co-responsibility in a community of disciples.

Caring puts us in connection with that reasoning capable of being affected by the situations that hurt and not being indifferent. A warm reasoning that allows us to face the harshness of life in a society of fatigue, dispersion, acceleration and competitiveness. A reasoning that does not fragment reality into pieces, but integrates it. A reasoning that understands that humanity and the planet are one. A heartfelt reasoning that focuses on the care of life and stands against all forms of abuse of life. A reasoning that is attentive to its own fragility and that of its surroundings, and that knows how to leave space to contemplate how God approaches and whispers creative words and new proposals, new "annunciations."

(Suggestion: How do we feel and live this heartfelt reasoning in everyday life? Can we make some concrete gesture as a local Marianist Family that expresses our being missionaries of Mary in the care of life?)

There is hope, Pope Francis tells us.

"There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle." (LS 211)

**"bring the whole human family together (...) for we know that things can change. "** (LS 13)

We invite you to visit these pages:

- Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development: in Italian, English and Spanish

<https://www.humandevlopment.va/en/progetti/laudato-si-action-platform.html>

- Laudato Si' Platform (several languages): <https://plataformadeaccionlaudatosi.org>

## 6. FAMILY PRAYERS

### We pray to you, Lord:

1. For the Marianist Brothers and priests, so that, motivated by Mary, with her and like her, they may know how to discern, welcome and collaborate with the forces that generate LIFE and carry the jars with their own life. (Fr. Paco Barrio, SM - Brazil).
2. For the Alliance Mariale, so that together with the entire Marianist Family, they may give witness to the merciful love of the incarnate God, Lord of life, committing themselves creatively to the different forms of promotion and development of the life of our brothers and sisters in the world. (M<sup>a</sup>. Eliana Rebolledo, AM - Chile)
3. For the Marianist Sisters, who are preparing for the 33rd General Chapter. We ask Mary's intercession, that we may be signs of her love and unity, in solidarity with each other, with the earth - our common home - and with the men and women of today. May our Founders inspire and accompany us. (Micaela Lee, FMI - Rome)
4. For the Marianist laity, so that they may live their commitment as missionaries of Mary, witnessing in the family and work environment that a new world is possible. (MLC)

### We thank you, Lord:

1. For the MARIANIST LIFE that we received from our Founders, for all the Brothers and Sisters who preceded us, who filled their jars, who drank the charism and, in the Communion of Saints, children of God, encourage us to continue offering the best wine that rejoices our LIFE. (Fr. Paco Barrio, SM - Brazil)
2. For the silent and simple witness, like that of Mary, of so many consecrated persons in the world who love, respect and tenderly care for the lives of the poorest and most abandoned. (M<sup>a</sup>. Eliana Rebolledo, AM - Chile)
3. To be able to imitate Adele's apostolic zeal and live as missionaries of Mary in the care of life. Thank you for the authentic solidarity in the face of the difficulties in this time of pandemic and for having a broader vision of integral ecology, opening us to the calls of the church and the world today. (Micaela Lee, FMI - Rome).
4. For all the MLC, the affiliated persons, collaborators, benefactors and friends of our Marianist Family; for their generous and persevering witness in daily life at the service of the Kingdom.

*Virgin and Mother Mary, you who, moved by the Spirit,  
welcomed the Word of life in the depths of your humble faith,  
help us to say our "yes" before the urgency, more imperative than ever,  
to make the Good News of Jesus resound in our wounded world.*

*Grant us now a new missionary zeal  
to bring to all the Gospel of life that conquers death.  
Help us to live the witness of communion, of service, of ardent and generous faith,  
of justice and love for the poor, so that the joy of the Gospel  
may reach the ends of the earth and no periphery may be deprived of its light. Amen. (EG,288)*

