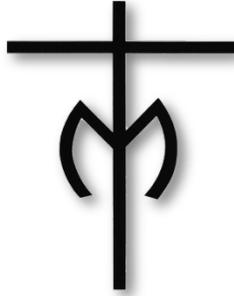


ASSURING THE MARIANIST IDENTITY OF OUR APOSTOLIC WORKS



CURIA GENERALIZIA DEI MARIANISTI
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FORWARD

For reasons that may not be the same in all the Units of the Society of Mary, the question of the specific identity of our Marianist works today constitutes for us an important and challenging issue. Would a person who does not know the Marianist charism and who has not sufficiently understood it be able to live it out and especially promote and transmit it? If not, how can we help him/her, particularly when that person occupies a position of responsibility in a Marianist work?

How can we help? Such is the concern that this document seeks to address. Initiated and written under the responsibility of the General Council, it was presented to the General Chapter of 2018, which *"approved it, considering its great usefulness, and proposed it for use in all the works of the Society of Mary"* (XXXV GenChap # 57a).

This document has benefited from the contributions of numerous religious of the Society of Mary as well as lay collaborators from all over the world, to whom, once again, I express our sincere gratitude. Now, the General Chapter asks the Councils of the Units to promote *"the study, diffusion,*

contextualization and application of the document" (XXXV GenChap # 57).

In order to allow the Units to use the document in the forms most adapted to their local situations, the electronic version is available in the three official languages of the SM, on the website of the General Administration (www.marianist.org /Education section).

May the work of adaptation and application of the content of this document help us to move forward in the management of our works.

Essodomna Maximin Magnan, SM
Assistant General for Education
Rome, September 12, 2018

ASSURING THE MARIANIST IDENTITY OF OUR APOSTOLIC WORKS

Presentation

1. The document you presently have before you is the synthesis of a long study conducted in consultation with the religious of the Society of Mary, as well as lay collaborators in its works throughout the world. It has been developed as a response to the concerns of the General Council over the increasing number of situations where the assurance of our ability **to maintain a proper Marianist identity within our works** was diminishing. This concern was echoed by the General Chapter of 2012 and the General Leadership Assembly (2015), provoking efforts to clarify which elements characterize and identify works as “Marianist” in relationship to the charismatic mission of the Society of Mary. These same situations also provide real and grace-filled opportunities for the diffusion of the Marianist charism in new and wider-reaching ways. As such, this document is primarily directed to the religious of the Society of Mary, but, of course, it also is relevant to our lay collaborators, inasmuch as they share our mission in very important and concrete ways.
2. From the outset, it is important to keep in mind the intended scope and context of this project, as well as *what it is not*. It is not intended as a single template for each and every work, but rather as a set of basic elements that are, or should be, common to our works, albeit in various ways, and adapted to

local situations, without losing sight of, or fidelity to, the core of each element. It is intended to articulate what a given work needs to receive from the religious of the Society of Mary, so that the designation “Marianist” truly represents substantial, actual characteristics of that work, not simply a name. Intentionally, it is not a missionary or pastoral plan for individual works, but it should be held in reference as these plans are locally developed.

The document recognizes that there are many different situations and arrangements by which we, the members of the Society of Mary, are engaged in apostolic works, and are ministering in relationship with other constituencies, within the Church, as well as in particular local settings. As a starting point, though, this document intends to address those works in which **members of the Society of Mary have a real and dynamic ability to influence that work through the application of our Charism.** Thus, particular situations regarding ownership, administration, decision-making, etc., can vary, but no work that lacks that ability, to one degree or another can be considered a work “of the Society of Mary.” The balance of this document seeks to articulate conditions that enable the SM to have a real and dynamic capacity to influence a given work, and thus identify it as “Marianist.”

3. As a point of reference, when this document uses the term “**Marianist**” to identify works, the intention is to refer to only those works of the **Society of Mary**, as qualified in the previous paragraph. It does not presume to speak about works of the other branches of the Marianist Family. In addition, the term “**works**,” clearly and appropriately applied to our educational ministries, is also intended to apply, by extension, to other apostolic ministries of the Society of Mary as well.

Introduction

4. This document intends to clarify the elements which characterize Marianist works in the following ways:
 1. To distinguish ***characteristics of our Marianist apostolic works*** which manifest the elements proper to our Marianist charism and help us to discern which works are best suited for our engagement and appropriate to our mission;
 2. To understand more fully the ***charismatic role of the Marianist community (both locally and on the Unit level)*** in a Marianist work, as well as the role of individual religious as agents for the transmission of our charism;
 3. To offer a vision and a perspective for the future regarding ***the participation of the laity*** within our apostolic works, while, at the same time, assuring that the Marianist identity remains present and dynamic;
 4. To understand, in depth, what is meant by ***Marianist administration*** (management and governance) and its relationships to, and within, our Marianist works.
 5. To develop ***guiding principles to assist Unit administrations*** in establishing, sustaining and terminating Marianist apostolic works.
5. The remainder of this document presents six essential elements which, together, broadly express what it means to

be a “Marianist” work. The ideal would be that all six might be present in a given Marianist work. Obviously, though, owing to the nature of the work and depending upon its environment, these six elements might not all be present to the same degree, or with a uniform importance, in all our works. Nevertheless, none of them should be completely absent. Certainly, a forthright and thorough evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis, according to a clear schedule determined in the missionary plan of each work or Unit. Upon such evaluation, if one or the other of these six elements is found to be absent, those in charge of the work – and of the Unit – should make every effort to address this situation. If it is obvious that, in a given work, almost none of these conditions is present, and that there are neither the means nor the desire to change that situation, it would be appropriate to question whether the work should continue to be considered a work of the Society of Mary.

6. Marianist works are essentially:

- I. inspired by the missionary plan of Blessed Chaminade;
- II. integrated in their ecclesial and socio-cultural context;
- III. animated by the Marianist religious community;
- IV. supported by structures designed to generate a genuine family spirit;
- V. focused upon the integral formation of the person;
- VI. fruitful in fostering justice and peace, solidarity and respect for creation.

7. There is one additional element that does not appear as such among the “conditions” listed above, yet it permeates all of them. It is the very soul, the foundation of each element, and

from it, each of the six draws its *raison d'être*. That element is the **Marian dimension of our Institute**, which informs each of its members and their activities. *"... as an Order justly celebrated has taken the name and standard of Jesus Christ, so we have taken the name and standard of Mary and are ready to hasten wherever she calls us, in order to spread her cult, and through it the kingdom of God in souls... Ours is a great work, a magnificent work. If it is universal, it is because we are missionaries of Mary, who has said to us: 'Do whatever he tells you.'"*¹

8. Our religious missionary commitment means assisting Mary in her mission of forming men and women in the likeness of Christ. Thus, we are inspired by her *fiat*, her steadfastness, wisdom and constant pointing to Christ as the source and summit of our salvation. In all our works, she is our model.



¹Chaminade, William Joseph, *Letters*, no. 1163 to Preachers of Retreats, August 24, 1839; 5:46, 52.

I. The Work is inspired by the Missionary Plan of Blessed Chaminade.

Meaning

9. A Marianist apostolic work is, by its nature and its origins, **inspired by the missionary vision of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade**. His spirituality, which defines our charism, rests upon the reality of the Incarnation and upon the function of faith, as one contemplates the unique role which God has chosen to assign to Mary. As Mary assumed her role in the mystery of the Incarnation, we aim to bring about a continuous rebirth of Jesus on this earth, conscious that through Christ, each human being is raised to the dignity of being a child of God, becoming part of the Body of Christ. Our entire mission is carried out under the guidance of that Mother who, in faith and through faith, gives birth, educates and faithfully accompanies, while always remaining at the Lord's disposal. This Marian character is an essential and inescapable element of our vocation and of every Marianist work.²

10. We respond to this call by offering our services to the Church and to all society, with the intention of **forming “persons and communities in a lived faith, expressed in service, responsive to the needs of the times”** (RL 63). Whatever the

² This statement is based upon the writings of Blessed Chaminade and various studies from all time periods and countries of the Society: Fr. Simler, Fr. Klobb, Fr. E. Neubert, Fr. Benlloch, Bro. Albano, Fr. J. P. Verrier, Fr. Arnaiz, General Chapters, circulars of the superiors general, . . . Among the more recent documents: GC of 2001: III, nos. 25-26; GC of 2006: nos. 8-12 and nos. 16-19; GC of 2012: no. 5; M. Cortés: Circulars 1 and 2; Joseph Lackner, *Marianist Charism and Educational Mission*, pp. 77-83; and Rosa María Neueuschwander de Rivas, “Educating for Formation in Faith: Theological Principles in Marianist Education,” pp. 122-128, in *Principles of Marianist Educational Praxis*, in the collection “Marianist Education: Heritage and Future.”

means we choose in apostolic mission, the end remains the same: to strengthen faith and multiply Christians.³

11. This work of evangelization is based upon a particular understanding of the human person, enlightened by the mystery of the Incarnation. **Each person is a child of God**, animated by love, and nurtured by Mary, the Mother whom God has chosen for his First-Born and all his brothers and sisters.
12. This faith perspective brings a very specific style to our mission, a **style marked by Mary's virtues**: the attentive, listening disciple; heartfelt and joyful acceptance of persons; promptness and availability; hospitality, unwavering faith and confident humility in the face of the unforeseen.
13. This undertaking is open, **called to adapt to diverse times, places and cultures**, so as to advance the coming of the Kingdom of God in our world today, and to lead each individual to realize his or her full potential, according to God's plan.

Implications

14. Our charism and the missionary style that flows from it are a **heritage** received from the teaching and practice of Father Chaminade, tested by a long tradition, spread throughout the world. The Founder was conscious of serving both the

³Chaminade, William Joseph, *Letters*, no. 725: "The education of youth, whatever form it may take, is certainly not the end you must have proposed to yourself in consecrating yourselves entirely to God, under the protection of the august Mary. Teaching is but a means to make use of to fulfill our mission, to introduce everywhere, so to say, the spirit of faith and of religion and to multiply Christians." Also, Art. 5.1 of the *Rule of Life*.

Church and the civil society of his own times by contributing, in a new and original way, to the renewal of faith, especially among the young, by means of the various works in which they exercised real responsibilities. His Incarnation-based anthropology still inspires us and indicates to us what types of works to undertake, and the way of attaining success in them.

15. As servants of that mission, *“It is clear that unless, like Chaminade, we set [evangelization and] holiness as the goal of all our missionary and pastoral planning, it will come to very little in a time which needs saints no less than the age in which your Founder lived.”*⁴

16. The politics and laws of some countries can put up resistance to evangelization and push us to row against the winds that blow over their societies. But, *“certainly, in the time of your Founder it seemed as though the waters had nothing to give. Yet Chaminade, like Peter, heeded the Lord’s command, cast his nets into the deep, and what a wonderful catch resulted! ... The waters of our supposedly post-Christian time may seem to have nothing to give.... Into such seemingly unpromising waters you must cast your nets as sons of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, knowing that Jesus alone can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart.”*⁵

Assuring fidelity to the charism of the Founder

17. Every Marianist work is an incarnation of the Marianist charism. In light of this, the work develops its formation

⁴ “Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Very Reverend David Joseph Fleming, Superior General of the Society of Mary” [and General Capitulants] July 7, 2001, in *Sent by the Spirit: Re-creating Chaminade’s Missionary Dynamism in Today’s World*, pp. 46-47

⁵ Idem

plan, based on the missionary plan of the Unit, which is itself a concrete way of adapting Chaminade's missionary vision today. This ***Marianist Missionary Plan*** takes account of the particular characteristics of the work, of its direct beneficiaries and their families, of the personnel that animate it, and of the local religious and social situations. Every person coming into contact with the work has the opportunity to be enriched within this charismatic context. Of course, different contexts require different approaches, leading to different expectations as to the depth to which we can actually achieve this. Faith and the charism are deepened *gradually* and require steady attention.

18. ***Communitarian Dynamic in a Context Nurtured by Faith.***

In addition to the actual objectives of the work itself, we aim to create a community context in which each person, whether collaborator or beneficiary, is able to grow in their experience of the faith and in their human development. In some cases, when groups are formed that share and reflect on the Gospel and on the practice of the Christian life, there could even develop, after a time of preparation and maturity, Marianist Lay Communities. These could also become bearers of our Marianist charism within the work or in its surroundings.

19. ***On-going Formation.*** The charism is dynamically lived and, therefore, continued formation, on a spiritual and apostolic level, as well as its application in mission, remains essential. Only in this way can we assure ongoing fidelity to the Founder's vision, our Marianist tradition and effective participation in the missionary call of the Church today.

20. ***Spaces and Places that Speak.*** Places speak. We must ensure that all aspects of the context in which we work really

do speak of our identity and mission. Thus, for example, we are careful to highlight Marianist traditions in a chapel or a clearly identified place for prayer; with titles and names of works; in developing logos used on official printed materials and for important events; religious signs; library holdings; names given to rooms or to sub-groups; electronic communications, decorations, reviews and journals made available that talk about our missionary work and identity, etc.

Along a similar vein, we are careful to respect creation and the environment. Our works outwardly reflect this care, in their attention to aesthetics, ecology and maintenance.

Assessment and Evaluation

21. Using the elements of this document, as well as other Marianist and Unit guidance documents, a ***self-evaluation*** instrument should be developed. This process aims to help each person and each sub-group of the work examine how well they have been agents or beneficiaries of the work and its mission and have been evangelizers or evangelized by the work.
22. ***Vigilances*** crucial to assure that there are no negative influences that end up corrupting the work and turning it away from its stated goals. In particular, we are careful to avoid an excessive concern for a material or social “success” that leaves too many people marginalized or neutralizes our prophetic witness in a given work. Similarly, we avoid an over-concern with financial profit, to the detriment of important considerations such as generosity, confidence in Providence, service to the poor and needy, etc.

23. On a periodic basis, ***an evaluation of the works*** made by others, from outside the particular work who, are well-versed in the Marianist charism, in order to see (from an outside perspective) how the work really does “speak,” and what it says to those who come in contact with it. Delegates of the Unit administration or “peer” visitations from other similar works of the Unit, could provide this service, with mutually beneficial results for all.
24. An important aspect of any evaluation includes an assessment of the **“Marian” character of the work**. Is this work “under the auspices of Mary ... a living spectacle of apostolic renewal and regeneration?” Is it “marked by openness, cooperation, mutuality, collegiality and a sense of service?” Do those who animate the work help God’s people “to learn, sustain and deepen their faith, to come together to actively witness to this faith, and to act in mission?”⁶

⁶ C.f. *Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration* (1.2)

II. The Work is Well-Integrated in its Ecclesial and Socio-Cultural Context

Meaning

25. ***A Work of the Church.*** Our works are at the service of the mission and evangelization of the Church. Each belongs to something bigger than itself, retaining a consciousness of being just one cell in the body of Christ. Thus, every Marianist work is a work of the Church, inserted into a given diocese. It is born as a response to an appeal of the local bishop, or at least with his encouragement and positive assent. It responds to a need expressed by competent authorities. Yet, this does not prevent the Society of Mary from attaching its own identity to the work or from bringing its own richness to it. Even where we are invited to work under another authority (i.e. the bishop), that invitation must imply a desire that our charism would be welcomed, shared and diffused liberally.
26. ***Incarnation.*** Our charism is a charism of incarnation, i.e., of nearness to human persons. Our fate and our future are closely linked to those of our contemporaries. Thus, “... *the charism inculcates in us a particular sensitivity to our times and to the context in which we live...*” (General Chapter 2001, #19).
27. ***An Institution Designed to Endure:*** In order that the work maintain consistency, stability, and the strength to endure over a long period of time, it is best that the work take on an institutional character. Works exclusively linked to the personal gifts of an individual are dependent on the ability of

that individual to animate them. But, those that develop an institutional character, become “*the man who does not die.*”⁷

Implications

28. *Concrete Incarnation in Time and Place:* The Gospel is addressed to people who live within their specific cultures, histories and given political and economic circumstances. These are the specific people whom our works aim to reach. Blessed Chaminade, nourished by the dogma of the Incarnation, was very attentive to that realistic element, being careful to adapt to it unceasingly: “*A new Institution is adapted to the times, the places, and the circumstances... it requires that all take into consideration the customs of the day... The Spirit of God does not suffer the least change in all of this, but shows that its influence is universal, knowing how to reach all men despite the diversity of minds and manners in different periods of history.*”⁸

29. *Juridical Standing:* It is important to clarify the legal status of the Society of Mary and of its works in the particular country. Chaminade, even if he was of a different political opinion, always strongly respected the legislation and the government in place. In order to achieve his vision, he prudently adapted his methods according to the means and resources available to him. Indeed, when he had problems on this level, it was generally because someone among his disciples had not paid attention to that wise attitude of the Founder.⁹

⁷*The Chaminade Legacy*, I, Doc. 154: “Answers to the Objections... Sixth question”.

⁸Letter 85, of January 20, 1817, to Bishop Jacoupy.

⁹ As an example: following the imprudent actions of Hyacinthe Lafon and his participation in a plot against Napoleon I, Fr. Chaminade was interrogated, imprisoned, and finally the sodalities were suppressed for several long years.

30. ***Our Assets:*** “*We are convinced that we have a wealth of gifts to offer the world and the Church (charism, spirituality, mixed composition, educational tradition, appreciation of the laity and the Marianist Family, human and material resources*” (General Chapter 2001, #20).

Assuring Proper Ecclesial and Local Integration of our Works

31. ***A Contract in Good and Due Form:*** For a Marianist work that is established in the normal way, with the approval of the competent local authorities in order to respond to a clearly identified need, explicit contracts are always desirable. “*Father Caillet will take with him to Strasbourg a copy of the Saint Hippolyte contract and other documents and instructions pertaining thereto*” (Chaminade, *Letters* 8/1; S. 390-2, March 28, 1826). “*I had no inkling that the document was irregular in form...*” (S. 641-2; September 10, 1832). “*... the mailman brought me a large package containing, in good and due form, a contract conformable to the conditions I had directly sent to M...*” (*Letters*, no. 1230 of December 5, 1840).
32. ***Entering into Networks:*** When, in a given country, there exist organizations that bring together works of the same kind (Catholic schools, nursing homes, apprenticeship organizations, parishes) in various forms, it is often wise to join them. They can provide guidelines, offer qualified assistance, share competencies. Their contribution is particularly valuable when the socio-political context is not entirely favorable to our mission. With the added benefit of its Marianist character, national and international networks of Marianist works can be extremely helpful as well.

33. ***Conflict Resolution.*** When situations arise that either contradict the demands of the Gospel and/or violate local civil norms, there is serious cause for concern. Attention to the rights of individuals involved, as well as the integrity of the work, of the Society of Mary and of the Church, is extremely important. In such situations, the leaders of the work must remain in contact with the higher authorities of the Society of Mary and of the local Church, with civil authorities depending upon the nature of the case, and not take actions or decisions precipitously. Every effort is made to resolve the problem properly, with respect for the persons involved and in concert with the competent authorities.

Assessment and Evaluation

34. ***Inclination toward Youth:***¹⁰ We need to verify that our works give rightful attention to youth, by identifying and evaluating initiatives confided to them. It is often through creating “*little societies*” that these initiatives can be put into practice. By creating experiences and positions of leadership adapted to their age, as did our Founder in his lay Sodalties, young people can be educated and thereby develop a sense of responsibility.

35. ***“A Profound Relationship with the Poor.”***¹¹We need to assess what relationships we have with the poor through our

¹⁰ Gen. Chap. 2012, p. 22: “We are very aware ...that the Society can bring...: a more profound relationship with the poor ... a clear commitment to the evangelization of children and youth...”

¹¹ Idem.

works and evaluate how these relationships incarnate our charismatic commitment to deepen our mission on their behalf.

36. ***Works Offer a Positive Influence for All Their Constituencies.*** All Marianist ministries exist for the purpose of serving clear needs within their local context. In this service, they seek to benefit not only those they serve, but also those who are engaged in carrying out that ministry. To ensure this, we need to know if these needs are being met, or what needs to be further addressed, so that they may, indeed, be met. We should also keep in mind that even those who *receive* services from the ministry may also become positively *engaged in serving* as well. For example: in a school, the older students could have monthly service work to carry out. Such initiatives would have double benefits: for the volunteers, the development of awareness about which they otherwise might remain ignorant; and for the recipients, the benefits of the service received.
37. ***Boldness and Creativity:*** Some situations may require searching for new solutions. Works that are well-integrated in their local setting seek to reach out to the needy, the forgotten, to all God's people, in a spirit of Evangelical inclusively. Thus, when evaluating our works, attentiveness to accessibility and adaptability, within the scope of the work's mission, is important and in keeping with the Marianist spirit.
38. ***Relationship with Civil and Ecclesial Authorities.*** Recognizing that our works are also subject to civil and Ecclesial authorities, external to the Society of Mary, a Marianist work considers respect and cooperation with these entities to be very important. Thus, we make every

effort to respond appropriately to norms and recommendations from these entities. It may happen that, in a given cultural, civic or political context, there be customs, standards, or laws that are opposed to the *Common Good* and to the Gospel. Pope Francis reminds us: “*Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods.*”¹² Without compromising our prophetic witness, but also with wisdom and prudence, we discern how, through the application of our charism, we can respond to or change these situations for the better.

¹² Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, #134, Pope Francis

III. The Work is animated by the Marianist Religious Community.

Meaning

39. ***The Marianist Religious Community of Reference.*** An apostolic work of the Society of Mary is “Marianist” inasmuch as it has received, and continues to receive, its charismatic inspiration from the Marianist community. Typically, this community has a real presence within the scope of the work, either because there is a local community associated with it, or through the influential presence of the local SM Unit, representing a “greater community,” manifested through particular administrative and mission-oriented structures (boards, councils, etc.). Each work certainly has its own missionary plan, which, of course, stems from the missionary plan of the Unit, and thereby assures a unified, community-based orientation. Even if there is no particular community attached to a given work, both those responsible for the work, and the leadership of the Unit, collaborate to assure that the charismatic setting of the work is strongly rooted in and supported by the Unit, as a sign of that work’s pertaining to the greater Marianist community.
40. ***Member of the Marianist Family.*** This community is aware of its being a member of a larger family, the Marianist Family, in relation to which its identity is defined and whose influence can be significant in the exercise of its mission. Thus, it acts as the spokesperson, in a dialogue with the other branches of the Marianist Family, as well as other relevant institutions, to guide and make decisions on issues of collaboration and shared mission regarding a common work.

41. ***Juridical Identity:*** In order to be able to act efficiently and to be recognized by local authorities, a work needs to have a juridical identity. That juridical identity may be held by the Society of Mary or by the Unit, as local legislation permits. It is often exercised through ownership and management organizations, whose forms and names vary, according to local structures. In any case, the Society of Mary must make sure that the selection and the formation of the presidents and administrators of these organizations, and their other governing bodies, allow her to have a determining charismatic influence and direction on the work, enabling her to assure the maintenance of its ecclesial and Marianist character. If not, the acceptance of, or the continuation in the work must be questioned.

Implications

42. ***Nature of a Religious Institute:*** The Society of Mary is an apostolic religious institute which exercises its mission in community, the latter being the “primary instrument to fulfill our mission” (RL 67).

43. ***“The man who never dies.”*** In order to assure the permanence of works, their spirit and their existence, Blessed Chaminade saw the need for religious congregations, each of which constitutes a “man who never dies”. *“Experience has helped us understand in this regard that for a director of a sodality, there is needed even more than we have indicated; there has to be a man who does 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. It is these views*

that have given birth to the Institute of Mary.”¹³ Only that “man who never dies” can continually “enliven the fire that enkindles other fires” (Gen. Chap. 2012).

44. **Resulting Benefits:** The presence of the religious life endows the work with “prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth...”¹⁴ and guarantees for it a perpetual vigilance over what is essential.
45. **Vocation Ministry and Our Works.** One of the Church’s missions is to mediate God’s call of individuals, helping them to embrace their vocation, as followers of Christ, and in service of God’s people. This call comes in infinite ways, including the call to the religious life. Recognition and discernment of one’s vocation does not occur within a vacuum, but in a concrete context, often within the context of one of our works. It is because of this that we can say our works have an important role to play in vocation ministry and in assuring the continued diffusion of our charism. Our “charism cannot continue without the attraction and development of new religious vocations” (RL 5.7). The Marianist religious community, therefore, chooses by preference “those works which form apostles and stimulate religious vocations . . .” (RL 73).

¹³*The Chaminade Legacy*, I, Doc. 154: “Answers to the Objections...Sixth Question”.

¹⁴ Apostolic letter of his holiness pope Francis to all consecrated people on the occasion of the year of consecrated life , II,2, November 21, 2014, citing “Speech to Superiors General,” November 29, 2013,

Assuring the Marianist Identity of Works through the Marianist Community

46. ***The Fundamental Role of the Unit Community:*** This role has many forms and is adapted to circumstances and needs. Above all, it is important to remember that the Unit must act as a unified body (*community*) in the animation of its works. Among its principal obligations are the following:
1. to establish a missionary program for the Unit, which the specific works adapt and put into practice according to their own proper nature;
 2. to assure persons for important positions in the work: the director, the person in charge of human resources or finances, etc. Appropriate procedures must be developed for this purpose;
 3. to visit the work in order to accompany, support, advise and evaluate the work being done;
 4. to send resource-persons to assist the work, as needed and appropriate;
 5. to participate directly, or through delegates, in the leadership of the work;
 6. to help the work “*develop a Marianist methodology for the growth in faith of persons and groups. A clearer and more systematic pedagogy of faith will give a deeper Marianist identity to our mission*” (General Chapter 2001, #27g).
 7. to maintain appropriate internal communication that helps preserve, in each person, a vital consciousness of his/her mission; a communication that goes both ways, from the Unit to the work and vice versa.

47. **Delegation:** Animation of the work can, under clear criteria and under the authority of the Unit Superior, be delegated to specific entities, such as the local Marianist religious community, located near or even within the work itself, or to an organization made up of competent laypersons or religious (i.e.: *Conseil de tutelle* in France, *Sponsorship* in the USA, *Patronato* in Spain).
48. **The Local Marianist Religious Community.** A given work draws great benefit from the presence of a local religious community. The Unit, therefore, will always try to make this possible.
1. A local Marianist religious community offers to the work, in a more striking way, that which is special to the religious life (fraternity, spirituality, sense of being sent on mission, etc.).
 2. By its involvement in the work and the commitment of the religious who work there, the community can more solidly imprint the Marianist character on the work (Gen. Chap. 2012, #28).
 3. The “living presence” of religious, as witnessed by their lay peers, is rich with reciprocal benefits: the religious come to better understand the actual labor conditions in the work, while the laity feel better understood, encouraged, and acquire a better sense of our spirit, our history, and our charism.
 4. Even elderly religious, no longer professionally involved in the work, continue to exercise a charismatic influence by offering their witness and their service to the work.
 5. It is clear that, as individuals and as a community, Marianist religious provide our works with unique and

essential gifts, which cannot be underestimated. As examples, the writings of Fr. Paul Hoffer, SM, 9th Superior General, are particularly eloquent in the articulation of this.

49. ***A vibrant and creative vocation ministry*** which involves all the agents in the work, both religious and lay, helps the Marianist religious community perpetuate itself and its apostolic mission.

Assessment and Evaluation

50. On a regular basis, the work is examined in relation to how well it is following its ***Pastoral and Missionary Plans***. These evaluations occur both on a local level (within the work and its local Marianist community), as well as on a Unit level.
51. ***Presence:*** An important question to be addressed during the evaluation is whether or not the Unit Council is sufficiently attentive to each work, sensitive to its problems and its successes, both those of the work itself, as well as those of the persons collaborating there?
52. ***Interventions:*** If, upon assessment, a work needs particular direction and/or accompaniment, the Unit administration should assure that such intervention is made and later evaluate its effectiveness. The nature and style of the intervention is carried out, by working within the administrative structures of the particular work, respecting subsidiarity and established lines of authority.

53. ***Relationship between the Local Religious Community and the Work:*** Those in charge, both of the work and of the local community, share a common mission. Thus, care must be taken to mutually support one another through open and respectful interaction. The degree of solidarity between the leadership of the work and of the Marianist community is directly proportional to the ability of the work to fulfill its mission as a “Marianist” work. Every effort is made to keep this relationship positive.
54. ***Religious Vocations as a Fruit of Our Works:*** Although most of the works of the Society of Mary were not specifically initiated for the purpose of fostering religious vocations, neither should this motivation be absent from any of our works. When evaluating the various fruits, we expect to see from our works, we, rightfully, must ask if these meet the provisions of the *Rule of Life* concerning vocations: presence of a program for developing vocations (RL 6.7 and 6.8), attraction and development of new religious and priestly vocations (RL 73 and 5.7).

IV. The Work is Supported by Structures Designed to Generate a Genuine Family Spirit

Meaning

55. Works of the Society of Mary are ***structured to support the charismatic goals and style*** that are inherent to our tradition. Thus, leadership and direction of these works are carried out according to the guidelines of the *Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration* (CMA), favoring shared decision-making, subsidiarity, and collegiality. In doing so, the work becomes a concrete manifestation of an essential Marianist element – family spirit.
56. The work is directed by a ***Leadership Team*** whose functioning has some typical features:
1. the sharing of responsibility among its members and decision-making in common;
 2. recognition of the Society of Mary as the welcome guardian of the Marianist charism within the work.
 3. clarity regarding the rights and duties that belong to the Unit Council, as well as the responsibilities of each of the work's leaders and stakeholders;
 4. integration of evaluation tools into the administrative and financial management system.
57. The CMA put the ***enhancement of the human person*** at the heart of Marianist apostolic activity. Accordingly, every Marianist director and administrator seeks to develop and enhance, in each of the persons involved in the work, the virtues of love, generosity, mercy, admiration, and interiority. The leaders themselves seek to imitate the style of Mary (cf. #12 above), through whom God chose to become

incarnate, and whose mission is at the heart of the work: that of bearing Jesus to a multitude of brothers and sisters.

58. The economic matters of the work are managed with care so as to assure a **financial stability** sufficient enough to enable it to carry out its mission in a fiscally responsible manner.

Implications

59. The system of the *Three Offices* has been a great gift handed down to Marianists from its Founder. This system allows any situation to be viewed from three distinct perspectives, so as not to overlook any essential aspect, and promote balanced, thorough and prudent decision-making. This way of administrating, which calls upon the diversified skills of various persons, constitutes a safeguard against ill-advised decisions that might otherwise be made by one individual acting alone. This management model has proven its worth over many years. In the course of our history, when this precious treasure was not respected, the SM often found itself confronting serious problems.¹⁵
60. The *selection and formation of the work's leadership* constitutes one of the most important concrete duties of the Unit Administration. Whenever possible, internal promotion of new leaders, which favors the maintenance of consistency with the work's intended mission and its Marianist character, is preferred. Similarly, careful nourishment of the formation of all the work's personnel, both as professionals

¹⁵ The Lalanne and Layrac affair: Cf. *Letter* no. 772 of April 27, 1835, to Bro. Mémain ; *Letter* no. 791, of August 4, 1835, to Fr. Lalanne (and the introductory commentary to that letter) ... The Layrac affair was going to last for years, and we can follow its sad vicissitudes in Fr. Chaminade's letters over time.... We know that the debts incurred just barely escaped ruining the SM and contributed greatly to the torments at the end of the Founder's life.

and in their knowledge of Marianist heritage, helps promote prudent selection of new leadership from within the work. Of course, additional formation may be necessary for new leaders, as they assume responsibility for a given work.

61. The system of the Three Offices contributes to the development of a broader ***sense of shared responsibility***, as it helps make leaders conscious that:
1. every orientation and every decision that is taken has repercussions, not only upon the work itself, but also upon the Unit, and ultimately, upon the Society of Mary, and even the Church;
 2. any responsibility that is confided to us at a given moment, we possess as stewards. At the end of our time, whenever that may come, we are invited to leave it in another's hands. Thus, the work does not belong to those who direct it. They inherit it and are called to hand it on in a better condition than they found it;
 3. No one operates within a closed circuit. Each one carries out the mission assigned to him/her according to the spirit and pastoral guidelines of the work, of the Society of Mary, and of the local and universal Church.
 - 4.

Assuring Structures that Promote Genuine Family Spirit

62. In addition to the Three Offices, the ***clear articulation*** of responsibilities, policies, terms of office, codes of conduct, and other structures is essential. This is not to promote rigidity or suffocate creativity, but rather to respect the desire for all collaborators to have clarity in what is expected from them, what is not permitted, and the concrete lines of authority that allow the work to achieve its mission. Yet, at the same time, creativity and initiative are enthusiastically

encouraged, as these assure that the work is constantly renewing its spirit and forming future leaders.

63. It is important to regularly recall the **history of the work**, in relation to that of the Society of Mary, so as to underscore what the work has inherited from it and contributed to it.
64. Through **personal accompaniment**, care is taken that those involved in the work might be able to grow, be they on the leadership team, staff or beneficiaries. Some ways to do this include: publicizing successes, accompanying them in difficult moments, helping new members become integrated, etc. Conversely, those who consistently either fail in the fulfillment of their responsibilities, or those who no longer display the essential desire to contribute to the mission, need to be confronted and corrected with respect and clarity, as one would engage in “fraternal correction.”
65. It is important to cultivate within each work a **sense of pertaining to something beyond the immediate work**, i.e., the local Marianist Unit, or the Society of Mary around the world. This is done by:
 1. joining the individual works into a network, wherever it is feasible. Typically, networks created within a particular Unit (i.e., for finances, ministry, Marianist pedagogy, formation programs, celebration of Marianist events, ...) assist in the harmonization of goals and practices;
 2. organizing common activities for several works of the Unit, (i.e. for directors, for business managers, for campus ministers, catechists, maintenance and service personnel...);
 3. promoting solidarity by making the works sensitive to each other’s needs and making one work available to help

another, according to its own capacity, just as in a normal, healthy family;

4. offering regular rewards that honor persons, individually or collectively, for long term service, outstanding achievement, dedication, etc.;
5. participation by the Unit Council and/or the local Marianist community in certain celebrations (birthdays, inaugurations, family or personnel events, etc.) in order to express the nearness of the Society of Mary to the work and make this familial connection organic.

Assessment and Evaluation

66. Close attention is paid to the established ***organizational statutes, civil laws and local norms*** of the work to ensure that these are respected. When necessary they are revised according to prevailing norms.

67. ***Fidelity to Marianist missionary goals*** requires diligent attention to preserving family spirit in the work. *“One of the keys to understanding the missionary plan of our Founder is appreciating his intuition that faith is best lived and developed within a community. Family spirit and the ability to create community and bonds of solidarity wherever we are, have been and continue to be among our strengths.”* (General Chapter 2001, #24c). Some signs of this fidelity would be:

1. contribution to the growth of the Marianist Family through the multiplication of groups and youth movements;
2. opportunities are provided and encouraged for reflection upon the great questions of human life, upon the meaning of life and upon vocation, in the broadest sense;

3. opportunities are encouraged and provided for maturation in the Faith of those who confess to be Christian, and for reflecting upon and promoting specific vocations;
 4. key leaders of the work manifest and promote a good understanding of the Marianist missionary goals, and they draw inspiration from it for their actions and decisions;
 5. those involved in the work manifest a sense of affinity and personal closeness to each other and to its mission. They feel accompanied by the work's community (both in the particular sense of the SM community, and the wider community of all those involved in the work) during moments of important personal or family events, be these happy or sad.
68. As Mary at Cana urged the servants to “do whatever he tells you,” we know that the spirit of **willingness and availability** is an important characteristic of any work in Mary's mission. Therefore, keen insight into a work's conformity with the Marianist mission is gained by evaluating such willingness and availability of those involved in animating the work, beginning with the Marianist community. Is there a generous spirit of mission, of being sent, that is enthusiastically poured out, to the degree circumstances permit, on the part of the religious associated with the work? Is this spirit well-received within the work? Do lay collaborators share this spirit, embrace it and generate it as well?

V. ***The Work is Focused upon the Integral Formation of the Person***

Meaning

69. Since every Marianist work involves persons with the capacity to grow, it constitutes in itself an ***opportunity for formation*** where, depending upon its own nature and the missionary priorities set out by the Unit, it strives to see that those persons come to know God better, live better lives, and fully develop as persons. This requires conscious planning of concrete formation activities for this purpose, by the work.
70. Such formation is ***inclusive***, aimed at all the persons involved in the work, especially the direct beneficiaries, but also other persons who are collaborators in the work. Of special importance are those in positions of responsibility (c.f. #60 above). We must not forget that religious who find themselves entering into new circumstances, may need formation in order to develop an understanding of their role in that mission.
71. By using clear and concrete methods, adapted to each work, and with ***clear aims***, the formation of the work's collaborators seeks to strengthen their role in the animation of the works. For all involved, formation programs endeavor to strengthen and educate in the faith and the Marianist charism, develop leadership skills, build a virtuous society sensitive to human social issues, near and far, great and small. In this regard, it would be good to be able to benefit from collaboration with the other branches of the Marianist Family, wherever this may be possible.

Implications

72. Beyond its immediate objective, every work has as one of its primary goals the ***positive transformation of the person***, leading to lives that are enriched, horizons that are expanded and souls that are happy, while at the same time diminishing oppression, bitterness, suffering, and hopelessness. “*Every job builds a person, as well as its product*” (Emmanuel Mounier). Since our actions transform us, we hope that they transform us for the better. For a work that claims to be of the Gospel, that is an absolute necessity!
73. The ***essential resource*** of a work is not primarily economic or financial, but human. It is the persons who give life to the work, who must be constantly attended to and led to achieve fully their potential.
74. Let us not forget the ***example of the Founder and of our history***. Father Chaminade often turned down interesting works, simply because he did not have persons who were well trained for taking them on. He deplored his disciples’ opening up too many works before finding well-trained persons. Good will is not enough, there must be competence. “*It seems to me, the schools of the Daughters of Mary have been far too much talked about. I would have preferred that while waiting for them to develop on a large scale, we had formed the teachers and lay supervisors*” (Letters, no. 171 to Mounier, Aug. 27, 1821).

Assuring the Integral Formation of Persons

75. The ***agents of formation*** are the Marianist religious, called to play a primary role in handing on the Marianist charism. Other agents of formation include other members of the Marianist Family who may be present, and any collaborator who sufficiently identifies with the essence of our charism.
76. There are many ***existing resources*** available to us. We should take advantage of those specifically Marianist resources already known. We especially mention some of them:
1. There are excellent “classics” of Marianist apostolic instruction that can be helpful to us. One of these, *Marianist Pedagogy*, by Fr. Paul Hoffer, SM, synthesizes many of the others in a magnificent way. For those involved in education, this is a powerful resource.
 2. The *Characteristics of Marianist Education* (CME) is an indispensable tool for educational works, which are an important part of our apostolate. But, these can easily be adapted for all the other works, with some minor changes in the language. These characteristics, though, should not be reduced to canned slogans and simplistic formulas. Every characteristic constitutes, in itself, a formation program with greater depths to plumb, in order to go deeper into its meaning, and benefit even more from its study.
 3. The *Principal Characteristics of Marianist Administration* (CMA) also forms a valuable handbook for administrators and managers.
 4. The collection *Marianist Education: Heritage and Future*, which covers and deepens the areas of CME and

CMA, offers key ideas for better understanding and speaking about our tradition and our charism.

5. The above only touches the surface, there is so much more. We are lucky to have among us past and present works by laypersons and religious which articulate our call to apostolic work. Zonal Centers for Marianist Studies may be particularly helpful in providing guidance in this type of formation.

77. *Identification and Formation of Formators for the Specific Needs of the Works.* It would be good to find persons, either lay or religious, to participate in teams in charge of developing formation programs needed by the work and of assuring their animation.

78. Our works, and those who labor in them, must be dynamic and full of vitality. Thus, we cannot overlook the ***importance of ongoing formation.*** This can take various forms:

1. *Formation through Collaborative Sharing:* Within the work we can create various opportunities and groups for reflection on faith and personal/professional development that cover many areas: religious, professional, socio-political, vocational. We must know how to identify and question events that touch and challenge those we serve and the world in which we live.
2. *Organized Formation:* We need to develop programs that are precise, coherent and complete in order to afford the specific training of persons while they are engaged in a given work. These programs take account of the various backgrounds of people and

adapt to the nature and structures specific to each work.

3. *Formation for the Acceptance of Failure.* One does not always meet success, whether in a given activity, or in life. Failure is a trying experience, but at the same time ambivalent. It can lead to psychological suffering, sometimes very heavy to bear, yet it can also be an opportunity for some thoughtful reflection which provokes a rebound that leads the person toward an even better state. Formation programs should take this into account.
4. *Time Management:* Time away from the work can also benefit the person and the work, depending on how it is spent. One can “recharge” and build a desire to deepen the effectiveness of one’s work. One can discover the usefulness of “vacation” time, if it is not completely given over to diversion, but rather allows some time for true “re-creation,” a privileged time to delve deeper into life and knowledge, professionally and as human beings (for example, some time spent in another country to learn another language or getting to know other Marianist contexts).

Assessment and Evaluation

79. The ***challenge of diversity*** in today’s world is real. We ought to assure that the diversity which exists in our works is a source of richness, and not an obstacle to our mission or a block against youth or outreach ministry, evangelization work and education in faith!

80. Do those who have responsibility for leadership show ***esteem for the work and knowledge of the charism by their leadership***? Do they know our charism well and, above all, do they work to deepen it within themselves and within the work that they serve? Renewal of terms must take this dimension into consideration as an important criterion.
81. We should regularly ***review the development of the activities*** to judge their appropriateness, examine the means used and, as time goes on, add others, if possible.
82. Enjoyment in one's work is a must. Understandably, the worker may become physically tired at the end of the day. Yet, if one has a ***heart filled with joy***, and values the work in which one collaborates, then it becomes natural to want to better know and live the charism and contribute towards enriching its expression in the work. Additionally, it is important to listen to feedback from those who have been the beneficiaries of our ministry. These are the ones who know us best, from experience, and can provide us with a wider perspective in understanding if and how our works have a true and lasting positive impact on person's lives.

VI. *The work is Fruitful in Fostering Justice and Peace, Solidarity and Respect for Creation*

Meaning

83. Our own witness through our lives, and our efforts through our works, especially in the engagement of youth, should cultivate the desire to ***build a better world through concrete, positive means***. In his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that “*The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.*”¹⁶ Questions of justice, peace, solidarity, and respect for creation have a very important place in the Marianist mission today, since we live in a world which still “continues to exploit rather than protect our common home.”¹⁷
84. This concern, therefore, “*calls us to a conversion of heart. As persons, we are to be poor in spirit and to be peacemakers. As communities, we are to live a simple life, to share resources, to offer warm hospitality, and to be an experience of reconciliation and true human communion*” (General Chapter of 1996, p. 21).
85. In a world in which everything is ***interconnected***, our gaze must extend beyond our own horizon. “*Experience shows that violence, conflict and terrorism feed on fear, mistrust, and*

¹⁶Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* #13

¹⁷Pope Francis to Authorities of Kenya and Diplomatic Corps, Nairobi, November 25, 2015

*the despair born of poverty and frustration.”*¹⁸It behooves us, therefore, to work with integrity and transparency for the *Common Good*, with a real concern for the needs of the poor.

86. **Poverty Has many Faces.** “By people who are ‘poor’ we refer not only to the economically poor, but also to those excluded from participation in our society, those who live without hope or love, and those who have never heard the Gospel preached in its fullness.” (Gen. Chap. 1996, p. 22).

Implications

87. Our works exist for the purpose of **nurturing the spiritual and personal lives of God’s people**, mindful of the kinship we share as members of one human family. Yet, we remain very conscious that much work still needs to be done in this area. “We are struck by growing inequalities among social classes and nations... We are saddened by the number of young people in affluent cultures who are indifferent to the plight of poor nations; we are saddened by the young people of poor nations who emigrate to escape the extreme poverty of their homeland, only to experience cultural rootlessness. Injustice, oppression, poverty and unemployment generate violence, wars, discrimination, insecurity...” (General Chapter 2001, #12). Our works reflect our desire to contribute to the reduction of these injustices, first by being conscious of them, and then with concrete measures to help remedy them as best we can.

¹⁸ Idem

88. **The Example of the Lord.** *“Throughout his life Jesus healed the sick, reconciled the alienated, reached out to the least in his society, preached the good news to the poor, and blessed the poor, the peacemakers, and those who thirst for justice (Mt 11:4-6; 5:3-10). As followers of Jesus (RL 2), solidarity with the poor ... is an essential element.... In persons who are poor, we see the face of Jesus” (Mt 25:3ff and Vita Consecrata 75)*¹⁹. Our works aim to become an incarnation of the merciful Christ in today’s world,
89. **Example of our Founder.** Blessed Chaminade was not content just to “speak the Gospel” to his Sodalists and his disciples. He sent them into places where the person was not respected in his integrity (prisoners, little chimney-sweeps...) and supported Marie-Therese de Lamourous in “the work of the Miséricorde” to help women rediscover their dignity and better the conditions of their life. Likewise, his constant concern for the promotion of human dignity was the motivation which caused his missionary orientation towards education through schools and vocational training. We continue this mission through our works.
90. As **our history** of apostolic engagement shows, we have always been committed to this mission of caring for the lowly and forgotten of society. Our tradition has always included “social” works, from our origins up until today: free courses, non-formal education...not to mention a multitude of “little societies” in our schools where young people can commit themselves to the service of others.

¹⁹General Chapter 1996, §40.

Assuring that Our Works Contribute to a More Just and Integral Society

91. ***Explicit Education for Solidarity, Justice, Peace and Respect for Creation.***²⁰ Marianist educational works must assure an orientation which explicitly helps youth: ***in word***, to understand the causes of poverty and the roots of injustice, and ***in action***, by inviting them to share in concrete activities of solidarity, justice, peace and protection of creation!
92. Knowing that education is one of the most powerful tools a society has for shaping its future, we ought to make the ***unique role of education*** understood as a means for responding to the needs of the poor and for the promotion of issues of justice and peace.²¹
93. ***Choice of Simplicity.*** According to the Marianist spirit, managers and administrators should give priority to “simple means and infrastructures,” a simplicity which makes the work more accessible to common people. They should rely, in the first instance, on the use of the means and resources available locally. Inspired by the similar motivations by which Marianist religious live community life, as expressed in articles 26 and 27 of *The Rule of Life*, our works strive to

²⁰Enlightened by the teaching of the Church, the work awakens the critical conscience of its members on the questions of justice and peace through having them involved in service experiences in this field (Gen. Chap. 1996, p. 23). By way of example: a parish sets up a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in the Ozanam style, which creates a soup kitchen or renders various services to refugees, a charitable work of legal aid, literacy teaching, etc. The young of all ages should be able to find a field of social action, whether temporary or on-going, where they do an apprenticeship for their responsibilities and their involvement.

²¹“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa, in a speech given on July 16, 2003.

reflect a spirit of simplicity in our works, without detracting effectiveness, beauty or harmony (General Chapter 1996, p. 23).

94. We are called to use means that ***favor and nourish reconciliation and peace*** throughout our commitments. At the same time, we seek to model social relationships, not by challenge and competition, but with a care for peace and complementarity.

Assessment and Evaluation

95. The ***Office of Temporalities***, in accord with the guidelines of the Unit, verifies that the objective of promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation are not forgotten or neglected.
96. With well qualified persons, both inside and outside the work, ***periodic evaluations*** monitor the effectiveness of its commitments to solidarity with the poor and as peacemakers (General Chapter 1996, p. 23).
97. On a ***Unit level***, means for reflection and instruments of evaluation which can help communities, ministries and services examine their personal and corporate commitment to justice are developed (General Chapter 1996, p. 24).
98. As with all other aspects of the Marianist charism present in our works, an appeal to ***Mary as model of faithfulness and intercessor for the suffering*** is a defining aspect for our

mission.²² Works which call themselves Marianist overtly exhibit this Marian character, as a whole and in the individuals who animate it. By doing so, the work becomes a true echo of that humble song of praise and hope proclaimed by Mary in her *Magnificat*.



²²“Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness. She is the Woman, “clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev 12:1). Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ, part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51), and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom.” Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* #239

In conclusion

99. The dawning of the **third century** of the Society of Mary corresponds with a moment of great importance in our history, and for our future. During the recent Bicentennial celebration, we often reflected with gratitude on the graces received by the Society of Mary, its members, and in its apostolic works. We also heard the clarion call to rededicate ourselves to continuing and strengthening Mary's mission, our mission, into the future. Yet, it is no secret that the situation of the Society of Mary with regard to its apostolic outreach has changed very much over the years. Today, instead of filling our works with vowed religious who have all been through years of charismatic formation, we engage with more and more lay collaborators who join us in this mission. They bring their own special vocation to these works and ask us to accompany them so that they may acquire and spread the graces of the Marianist charism through them. We see that these lay people, like the religious, really do want the work to have a Marianist identity, not only for the sake of tradition, but because it provides the Church and the world with a particular gift, a charism, that is grace.²³

²³Fr. Manuel Cortés, SM, Superior General, in his Circular #6: To Know, Love and Serve Our Founder's Inspiration (2017) has written: "*This phenomenon of the adhesion of the laity to our mission and to our spirit, is not exclusive to the Society of Mary. It is a phenomenon common to religious life today, above all for active religious life, but not only. Contemplative religious life has also seen growth around a rich constellation of groups of faithful laypeople. In my view, given this factual reality, evident and undeniable, we have a clear call of the Spirit at this present time in the Church. Giving us this great gift of a generous and responsible laity, as if the Spirit were calling us to put ourselves at their service, to offer to the laypeople what they need from our charism as they live out their faith and their Christian commitment. And, what is it that they need and seek from religious life? In my opinion, the answer can be synthesized in three words: mission, fraternity and spirituality.*"(2.2) See also: *Vita Consecrata*, #'s 54-56.

100. This document endeavors to identify the “cardinal virtues” of Marianist apostolic works. They are “cardinal” in the true sense of that word – those elements upon which the Marianist identity of a work are “hinged.” During the study leading up to the formulation of this document, it was quite clear that, although the present situation and the prospects for the future present new and different challenges, the tools for facing these challenges are already in our possession. The wealth of writings, resources and traditions that have animated our work and works for these last two hundred years contain the essential principles which, with appropriate adaptation for a new age, will assure the continuation of true Marianist apostolic mission. These pages have provided a synthesis, but you are also invited to return to the sources, the springs from which the articulation of our charism flows, with great appreciation of what we have inherited, and enthusiasm for what lies ahead!

May Our Lord Jesus bless us, our Mother Mary guide us, and our Blessed Founder intercede for us as we work together in mission for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity, the honor of Mary, and to follow Christ more closely in his saving mission!

