



INTERNATIONAL TEAM / MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITIES
EQUIPO INTERNACIONAL / COMUNIDADES LAICAS MARIANISTAS
EQUIPE INTERNATIONALE / COMMUNAUTÉS LAÏQUES MARIANISTES

Guide To Lay Life in the Marianist Tradition

A response to *Challenges for the Future 2005-2009*,
from the 4th International Meeting of Marianist Lay
Communities

“to integrate the documents from the past four
Convocations into one document that would be the
starting point to a guide about lay life.”

*This document is an integration of the four documents
produced at the International Convocations, held in 1993,
1997, 2001 and 2005. Endnotes have been provided to refer
the reader to the original documents. The full titles and texts of
these documents can be found at www.clm-mlc.org. Only
redundant text (phrases that appeared in more than one
document) has been edited out. A few words have been added
for clarity.*

*Prepared by staff at the North American Center for Marianist Studies
in Collaboration with the International Team for Marianist Lay
Communities.
April, 2009*

April, 2009

Dear Friends,

*The International Team for Marianist Lay Communities is pleased to present the **Guide to Lay Life in the Marianist Tradition**. The Guide is a response to the Challenge of the 4th International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities to “to integrate the documents from the past four Convocations into one document that would be the starting point to a guide about lay life.”*

We have taken certain key passages from our foundational documents that we think can help form Lay Marianists in the Marianist tradition. The four documents can be found at www.clm-mlc.org.

The titles of our foundational documents are:

The Identity of Marianst Lay Communities, Santiago, Chile, 1993
The Mission of Marianist Lay Communities, (Lliria, Spain, 1997)
Being in Community (Philadelphia, USA, 2001)
In Alliance With Mary (Bordeaux, France, 2005)

We have organized the Guide in sections and each theme uses citations from all four of our documents. After each section there are discussion questions that can guide individuals and communities who seek to be formed into the Marianist tradition. It is our hope that as the Guide is used, communities and individuals will help shape the future editions of the guide by submitting their own study questions and comments on the guide.

³⁵ MR, 32
³⁶ I, 3—3.3
³⁷ MN, 2.4
³⁸ MN, 2.4
³⁹ I, 4.3
⁴⁰ C, 5.1
⁴¹ I, 4.1
⁴² C, 5.2
⁴³ C, 4.4
⁴⁴ C, 5.3—5.5
⁴⁵ MN, 6.4
⁴⁶ I, 4.2

Endnotes

- I= *Identity Statement of Marianist Lay Communities* (1993)
MN= *The Mission of Marianist Lay Communities* (1997)
C= *Being in Community* (2001)
MR= *In Alliance with Mary* (2205)

- ¹ I, 1
² MR, 2
³ I, 1
⁴ MN, 3.1
⁵ MN, 1.1
⁶ MR, 3
⁷ MN, 4.3
⁸ MR, 30
⁹ MN, 1.3
¹⁰ I, 1
¹¹ MN, 1.2
¹² I, 1
¹³ MN, 1.4
¹⁴ MN, 3.2
¹⁵ I, 2
¹⁶ I, 2.2
¹⁷ MN, 4.1
¹⁸ MN, 4.2
¹⁹ MR, 4
²⁰ MR, 5
²¹ MR, 6—16
²² I, 2.1
²³ MR, 17—25
²⁴ MR, 26; 28
²⁵ MN, 5.4
²⁶ MN, 6.1—6.3
²⁷ MN, 2.1—2.3
²⁸ MN, 5.1—5.3
²⁹ I, 2.4
³⁰ MR, 29—31
³¹ MN, 3.3
³² I, 2.3
³³ C, Preamble
³⁴ C, 1.1—4.3.3.

Please take time in reflecting and studying the **Guide to Lay Life in the Marianist Tradition**. We also invite you to go to our web site www.clm-mlc.org to download and read the complete documents on which the guide is based. And if you find the Guide useful in your own study and formation please help us share the guide by making it available to all who seek to understand what it means to be a Lay Marianist.

With Mary as our mother and first disciple and believer in her son Jesus.

Sincerely,



Anthony Garascia MLC
President
International Team
Marianist Lay Communities
agarascia@sbcglobal.net

Table of Contents

Lay Marianists are people who....	
Grow in understanding of the founders of the Marianist Family and how the Marianist charism is a gift both to the world and to the Church.	5
Grow in understanding of and relationship with Mary.	8
Embrace the mission of Jesus that is expressed in the scripture, "Do whatever He tells you." (Jn. 2:5)	14
Help build and sustain communities of faith and hope.	18
Grow to be a prophetic sign within the Church.	26
Grow in prayer and faith.	28
Give time and talent to the Marianist Family Give treasure to support our lay organization.	31
Endnotes	34

WE ARE FORMED

How much do we know about the four branches of the Marianist Family: the Alliance Mariale, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Marianist Lay Communities, and the Society of Mary? How much do we know about Marianist Lay Communities in our country, region, and around the world? Where can we find more information?

WE PRAY

How can our prayer reflect our family spirit? How can prayer help to form and nurture our community of communities? How can prayer offer collaborative support in our mutual mission and in times of need?

WE ACT

How can we support and promote the work of Family Councils? How can we support and promote the work of our local and national Marianist Lay Community structures? How can we support the work of the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities?

Each Marianist community is at once local and universal. Each community acts locally, but shares in the effort of the entire multicultural Marianist Family to bring Christ to the world as Mary did.

Marianist Lay Communities participate in the creation of Marianist Family councils at the local, national, regional, and international levels and participate in them as full members. Our relationships with other branches of the Marianist Family are rooted in solidarity, equality, respect for autonomy and diversity, and shared responsibility. In this way we witness to our founders' prophetic view of the Church.⁴⁴

We support the work of the World Council of the Marianist Family especially in its efforts to unite all Marianists in one common vocation.⁴⁵

The expenses of the organization and the functioning of Marianist Lay Communities are paid for by the members.⁴⁶

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

grow in understanding of the founders of the Marianist Family and how the Mariaist charism is a gift both to the world and the Church

Marianist Lay Communities are Christian communities at the service of the mission of the church in the world. We are part of the worldwide Marianist Family and are inspired by the charism of our founders.¹ Blessed William Joseph Chaminade throughout his life, and especially at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa, Spain, received a powerful Marian inspiration. With Venerable Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Venerable Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, he shaped this inspiration into a new missionary vision for the revitalization of the Church in France by means of establishing lay communities in alliance with Mary. (N.B. Throughout the history and tradition of Marianist Lay Communities this "Alliance with Mary" has also been called "Consecration to Mary" in different parts of the world.)²

Through our baptism, we are called to become like Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.³ As baptized people, the center of our life is the following of Christ and our conformity with Him from within the Church. Thus, Christ is the source and foundation of our mission.⁴

Our founders, through the Marianist Family, offer us today a spirituality based on the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, Son of God become Son of Mary for the salvation of all people.⁵

In every culture throughout the Christian world we see diverse forms of Marian devotion. Marianist spirituality invites us to collaborate with Mary in her

mission to make Christ present in our world. This way of understanding our relationship with her has been called Alliance with Mary; it is what unites us with all members of the Marianist Family and leads us to form and build Christian communities.⁶ Consecration to Mary within the Marianist Family witnesses our commitment, in union with her, to make Christ present in the world.⁷ We express our Alliance with Mary in a community celebration with varied expressions depending on location, respecting our rich cultural diversity.⁸

Present in the world, united to Christ by means of our alliance with Mary, and strengthened by the power of the Spirit, we work to build the Reign of God.⁹ By our Marianist vocation, we are inspired to live our call to make Christ present in the world.¹⁰ This is the ultimate meaning of our belonging to Marianist Lay Communities, and we choose it as a life option.¹¹ Membership in Marianist Lay Communities is a commitment of the whole person.¹²

We consider our personal and community life as our primary means of evangelization, in service to the mission of the Church in the world. We seek to collaborate in all missionary activities aiming at the multiplication of Christians and the development of a world that is more just and compassionate, more free and more interdependent.¹³

To be authentic, generous and faithful in our mission, it is essential that we be men and women "strong in faith, firm in hope, and constant in love." We find this strength through prayer, continuing formation, personal and community discernment, commitment, and community life.¹⁴

As members of Marianist Lay Communities we have responded to a call from God to live and share the Marianist charism.¹⁵

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

give time and talent to the Marianist Family and give treasure to support our lay organization

We are part of the Marianist Family in that we share a common charism. Mutual collaboration among all branches of the Marianist Family enriches each one and better serves the mission of the church.³⁹

Marianist Lay Communities are communities within the larger community of the Marianist Family which includes four branches: the Alliance Mariale, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Marianist Lay Communities, and the Society of Mary.⁴⁰

We lay Marianists are organized in small communities that form groups on local, regional, national, and/or international levels. Each group has its own autonomy as proper to its level. On each of these levels there is a responsible lay person or lay team, and a lay or religious Marianist advisor.⁴¹ All members are invited to participate at all levels.⁴²

On all organizational levels and through its individual members, Marianist Lay Communities seek to participate in the mission, activities and decisions of the church.⁴³

Isolated communities are incomplete. Through national organizations, each Marianist Lay Community is linked with other Marianist Lay Communities in its country or region and, through the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities, with Marianist Lay Communities around the world. All communities are thus enriched by a larger worldview that goes beyond local concerns.

WE ARE FORMED

As individuals, and as a community, are we committed to “developing our faith, and growing in the assimilation, living and handing on of the Marianist charism”?

How does our present formation help us to “give realistic and effective answers to the concerns of the world by transforming the many aspects of our lives: personal, familial, occupational, social, educational, political, economic, cultural, and ecclesial.”³⁸

WE PRAY

What is my favored prayer style? What is the favored prayer style of my community? What are our strengths, and what are our weaknesses in our prayer? What spiritual guidance is available to us?

WE ACT

As lay Marianists, how can we “model Mary’s way of freely and generously responding to the Spirit’s call” in our prayer and in our actions? How can we “live our consecration to God in the spirit of Mary” in our daily tasks?

WE ARE FORMED

How does our community deepen our understanding of our Marianist history and charism? How is our own Marianist story connected to this history? How is the Marianist charism lived in our own present time and place?

WE PRAY

What does the Incarnation mean to me? How is “the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, Son of God become Son of Mary for the salvation of all people” reflected in our prayer life?

WE ACT

How do we, as individuals and as a community, make Jesus present in the world? How can we live more fully this “life option” each day?

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

grow in understanding of and relationship with Mary

We welcome Mary as mother, model and educator. She freely accepted the Spirit's presence in her life and, in faith's darkness, carried and gave birth to God-with-us, and then gave Christ to the world.¹⁶

We recognize the mission of Mary in the history of salvation. In Mary, God shows us a way to be present in the world. Sensitive to the needs of humankind, we want to fulfill her command: "Do whatever He tells you." (Jn 2:5)¹⁷

Mary's mission is our mission and is inspired by Mary's attitudes of listening to the Word of God, openness to the Spirit of God who guides us to prophetic action, availability to the will of God, simplicity, and fidelity. United with her in her *Magnificat*, we want to be witnesses in the world to God's preferential love for the poor.¹⁸

In living our Marianist spirituality, we face the challenges of our times in different places with very diverse cultural and social experiences. Our personal and community lives are threatened by fragmentation and isolation. We Marianists find in Mary a source of strength in these challenging times.¹⁹

Today, attentive to the signs of our times and eager to integrate faith and life, we find in the teaching of our founders and in our Alliance with Mary the path that inspires us to deepen our commitment.²⁰

... developing our faith, and growing in the assimilation, living and handing on of the Marianist charism.

... developing a personal life-style and a work or ministry and discerning it in community.

... being open to spiritual guidance from others.

... developing skills in cultural and social analysis that help us interpret accurately the "signs of the times".

... developing skills that lead to personal and community actions for the construction of a more just and human world.

... working responsibly and with an attitude of service in various life situations, for example, family, job, society, politics, neighborhood associations, parishes, education.

... participating actively in the life of the community. Our communities, signs of unity, are also places of prayer, formation, reflection on the Word, reconciliation, and renewal of our commitment of service to others.³⁶

Our spirituality animates us and impels us to give realistic and effective answers to the concerns of the world by transforming the many aspects of our lives: personal, familial, occupational, social, educational, political, economic, cultural, and ecclesial.³⁷

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

grow in prayer and faith

We seek to make this charism incarnate in our lives and to center our lives in Jesus who is the Good News of God for today's world.

For this reason we model Mary's way of freely and generously responding to the Spirit's call.

- We work to build the Reign of God, attentive to the "signs of the times," fully incarnated in the world and in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized.
- We live together in a spirit of family, characterized by hospitality, compassion, service, joy, simplicity, and respect for persons and their particular rhythms of growth and development.
- In order to respond to our vocation, we live our consecration to God in the spirit of Mary. For us this is:
 - A freely chosen response to our Baptism and Confirmation.
 - An explicit commitment to the service of Mary in her mission to offer Christ to the world.

Faithful to our vocation, we commit ourselves to a way of life which demands...

... dedicating time to personal and community prayer (In some countries the Three O'Clock Prayer and the Consecration to Mary are prayed regularly).

... listening to the Word and celebrating our faith through the Eucharist.

We first endeavor to know Mary.

Mary is for us an inexhaustible spring of knowledge. Therefore, we look to discover her attitudes in the Scriptures like in the following passages:

In the Annunciation (Lk. 1: 26-38) we discover Mary's trust in God and her joyful acceptance of God's will. With her, we say "Let it be done to me according to your Word".

In the Visitation (Lk. 1: 39-45) we learn from Mary to be close to and serve others. Despite our own difficulties we wish, like her, to be always disposed to offer the best of ourselves to others.

In the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1: 46-55) Mary sings of God's solidarity with the poor, the afflicted and the marginalized. She is a witness to the transforming power of God that raises the lowly and destroys evil in the world. Following the example of Mary we desire to be valiant witnesses and prophets of the greatness, power and mercy of God.

In Bethlehem (Mt. 2: 1-12) Mary gives birth to Jesus and presents him to everyone, the lowly and the powerful. Moreover, she is attentive to all that happens and treasures it in her heart. Following her example we also wish to be a gateway for the entrance of Christ into the life of men and women of our world, enabling Him to be born and to grow in everyone, and to meditate deeply on these events as Mary did.

Mary had to flee into Egypt (Mt. 2: 13-23), forced by the violent circumstances of the times, to protect the life of her son. She educates us into a gospel attitude when facing violence. We wish to

be in solidarity with all those who suffer a similar situation today.

When she finds the child Jesus in the temple (Lk. 2: 50-51) Mary does not understand the plan of God but keeps it in her heart. By her attitude Mary invites us to live the faith of the heart, to accept and carry out the will of God even though we may not understand it.

At the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2: 1-11) Mary reveals herself as a woman attentive to the needs of others in each moment and is confident in her Son. Her attitude calls us to listen to the needs of humanity and be open to “do whatever He tells us.”

Mary stands at the foot of the cross of her Son with the beloved disciple (Jn. 19: 25-27). We want, like them, to accept our own suffering and to be present to the pain of others. Jesus continues to offer us Mary as our mother and she receives us as her children.

At Pentecost (Acts 1: 14) Mary is with the disciples of Jesus, praying, supporting their faith and trusting in the coming of the Holy Spirit. She animates us to form united and prayerful communities; and to reach out in mission, open to the action and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To deepen our knowledge of Mary we need to get in touch with her through prayer, formation, and our personal living—making her present in our lives. Apart from Scripture we seek to form ourselves from other sources, particularly in the documents of the Church, the writings of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, writings in the Marianist tradition, and the documents of the Marianist Family.²¹

- Sensitivity and affection. All draw closer to people, sharing their joys and their sorrows.
- Patience. Respecting and understanding the stages of growth in others.
- Courage. To stand for justice and truth in order to build the Reign of God.

Finally, we build a Church in which all are responsible for the Reign of God.³⁵

WE ARE FORMED

How can our community form us in the characteristics of the Marian dimension of Church? How can our formation methods reflect these characteristics?

WE PRAY

How can we reflect the Marian dimension of Church in our prayer? How can each of the characteristics deepen our relationship with God and with each other?

WE ACT

What characteristics of the Marian dimension of Church are present in our Church? What characteristics, if any, are missing? How can we, as Marianist Lay Communities, actively promote and model the Marian dimension of Church to others?

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

grow to be a prophetic sign within the Church

As members of the Marianist Family, we promote the Marian aspects of the Church. We believe that this Marian dimension is our gift in the Church and that the Holy Spirit will guide us to contribute to building a new humanity. We hope to be a prophetic sign in our society and of a Church with the following characteristics:

- Inclusivity. Her doors are open to all who seek God.
- Equality. All are heard and encouraged to express themselves as equals, and all have the same rights without consideration of sex, race, education, civil position, or social status.
- Participation. Authority is understood as service without privileges, channels of consultation are opened for decisions and assignments, and no one feels excluded for thinking differently.
- Dialogue. There is an attitude of listening and of interaction among persons and groups before any judgment or condemnation; this permits exploring the limits of human knowledge with firm trust in the Holy Spirit.
- Solidarity. There is increased nearness to the poor and the impoverished in order to bring them the Good News of their dignity as children of God and to assume together reciprocal obligations that enable us to build a civilization of love.

We strive to love Mary.

We want to be women and men who are strong in faith, a faith of the heart inspired by love, by which we persevere in hope.²² Like Mary, lay woman of her times, we are lay Marianist men and women who live in a specific time in history committing ourselves, as we are, to follow Mary's example and to love as she loves.

One of the characteristics of our time is the proliferation of and desensitization to violence. As Marianist we choose to reject violence and educate youth and adults in justice, peace and reconciliation.

As members of the People of God who are on pilgrimage, living as a specific people in a local church, we live the story with our brothers and sisters. We publicly express our commitment to and love for Mary through expressions of Marian devotion proper to our cultures.

Mary, praying woman, calls us to pray in all the moments of our lives and to be united in solidarity with the suffering of others. Mary is our intercessor. She prays with us and for us, and we pray to her as Mother of Jesus and our Mother.

Mary remained attentive to the Word and lived the "faith of the heart," confidently accepting the will of God in her life. Following her example we make faith the criterion for our discernment and the centre of our lives.

We live a family spirit that is based on hospitality, acceptance and care for one's neighbor, discovering the presence of Jesus in others. As at Pentecost Mary accompanies our communities and makes them open to all, fully accepting of each person.

In the same way that Mary is Mother of all, we open our hearts and communities to everyone. Given our multicultural character we are enriched by our differences and focus on community life and mission, promoting an authentic family spirit and open dialogue.

Like Mary, we seek to be humble in our individual and family lives so that our communities exhibit simplicity and we are able to place our gifts at the service of the common good.

Just as Mary was more concerned about the needs of her kinswoman Elizabeth than her own and went to be with her, we are attentive to the needs of our brothers and sisters. We commit ourselves to solidarity with the poor in the cause of justice.²³

We seek to serve Mary.

We seek, as members of Marianist Lay Communities, to imitate the virtues of Mary in our personal and community lives and place ourselves at the service of the specific society in which we live. Our Marianist identity leads us to witness by our presence and hard work that our Marian devotion, according to Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, is a dynamic devotion that goes beyond ritual and affection; it propels us to mission.

The Alliance to which Mary invites us renews our Baptismal commitments. Through it, we choose to live in permanent mission with Mary to give Jesus to the world by walking with her in humility and freedom. By this Alliance we place our trust in the Holy Spirit so that Christ may grow in our hearts and we may make Mary's mission a reality.²⁴

Singing the Magnificat with Mary, our communities seek to be open to the Spirit, to stand against injustice, and to proclaim a message of liberation and hope.

- We are in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and we work for justice and peace. We promote human rights, human development, inclusive relationships, and ecological values.
- We give special attention to initiating and sustaining Marianist Lay Communities in which young people are welcomed.

Our family spirit and the collaboration among all the members of the Marianist Family are our special contributions to the renewal of the Church.³⁴

WE ARE FORMED

How does our community “encourage life-long learning and growth of unique God-given gifts”? How do we “seek to advance in wholeness, maturity, and liberation”?

WE PRAY

How is our faith “discerned, nourished, celebrated, and lived in community”? How does our prayer reflect, support, and nurture our apostolic spirituality?

WE ACT

How is our community both “gift and task”? How do we “encourage members to live the Gospel fully in the public arena”?

Our communities are not an end in themselves and thus we express our missionary spirit not only within the community but also in our relationships with the world.

- Our experiences in community prepare us for mission.
- Prayer opens us to God's action and increases our sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Formation deepens our understanding of God's love for all people and the need for liberation.
- The community life builds, deepens, and enlivens our relationships with others.

We support the involvement of our members in a variety of ministries in

the world.

- As missionaries of Mary we are community builders in those fields of action in which we are involved.
- We especially encourage members to live the Gospel fully in the public arena.
- We encourage persistent missionary actions by members, other communities, the Church, and the world.
- We are open to and support new apostolic initiatives.

WE ARE FORMED

Describe Mary in your own words. How has my image of Mary been formed? Has my image of Mary remained the same, or has it changed? What does an alliance or covenant with Mary mean for me?

WE PRAY

What role does Mary have in my personal and communal prayer? What do the attitudes of Mary in the scripture passages teach us about prayer? How does our community celebrate Marian Feasts and local customs?

WE ACT

Describe a present situation - local, national or global - that is a cry for peace and justice. How can we give a "Magnificat" response? How can we model the attitudes of Mary in our actions?

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

embrace the mission of Jesus that is expressed in the scripture, "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn. 2:5)

We are all missionaries. Marianist Lay Communities are missionary. Each community encourages its own members, other lay communities, the Church, and the world to live in a state of mission.²⁵

Our missionary vocation, attentive to the signs of the times, should find its individual and community expressions in dedicating our time, skill, energy, and resources to actions that promote justice and peace. We believe that in order to live the Gospel according to the spirit of the Incarnation, we cannot escape the often contradictory and unjust realities of our world.

We are open, as sponsors or collaborators, to all missionary works. Our particular predilection for mission is to hand on the faith to young persons and those who are most needy.

Marianist Lay Communities work together with the other branches of the Marianist Family to accomplish our mission. Our Family Spirit and our collaboration between lay and religious, inspired by Mary, is our particular contribution to the Church and to the world.²⁶

As we are present in the world, we attempt to know, love, and transform with the heart and the strength of Christ Jesus. We recognize everything that is good in the history of humankind and denounce everything that contributes to oppression, violence, and injustice. "Clothed in the love of our Savior and the tenderness of Mary," we concern ourselves with the joys and sufferings, the hopes and anxieties of our world.²⁷

Communities are self-supporting and determine a means of sharing community expenses. As appropriate, each community contributes to the general expenses of all levels of the Marianist Lay Community organization.

To survive and grow as a community, each group must constantly renew itself and remain open to new challenges. This requires formation, prayer, and seeking out guidance and resources.

We see formation as an essential way to understand the communitarian dimension of the Marianist charism. It provides education for the development of communities. Through formation, members become less centered on personal support and more focused on mission and the needs of others.

Each group is an ongoing mission in itself and each member is missionary, especially when actively working to create and extend the community.

We are a community "in permanent mission."

At Pentecost, Mary, in the midst of the first Church community, helped to sustain the faith, prayer, and expectation of the Spirit. She is the model of apostolic spirituality for those whose mission is described in the Gospel.

times"—and ways to serve in various ministries and to act for justice and peace in the global village.

Our communities help us in all the dimensions of our lay life and constitute our worship of God. Our daily life, with all of its challenges and ambiguities, is our testimony of faith and our way of following Jesus in our Marianist spirituality.

Our communities are signs of hope and witnesses of fidelity, equality, and solidarity in today's world. We cloak ourselves in Mary's courage in the Magnificat, in which she radically responds to the demands of the world and converts us into signs of hope and witnesses of fidelity, equality, and solidarity.

We are a community that builds communities.

Inviting and helping people to live their faith in community is our favored means of evangelization and of effecting social transformation.

Each new community develops its own life of prayer, celebration, mutual support, witness, and social action. In its development as a community, it is guided by the larger Marianist community and normally by a lay or religious resource person.

While creating a common Marianist culture, each community celebrates the beauty of its diversity through its unique traditions and symbols.

Each community organizes itself as appropriate for its size and activities. Each has an autonomous leadership, discerned or elected by its members. The leadership cares especially for growth in faith, formation, hospitality, and social action.

We are witnesses of the Gospel. We evangelize with our lives that give testimony to a lived Gospel faith. We live in a state of permanent mission. The community helps its members to discern and evaluate their personal mission. In itself, the witness of community life is a privileged means of our Marianist mission.²⁸

Faithful to our lay state and attentive to the "signs of the times," we are united with the men and women of our world. We are missionaries, committed to announcing the Good News. Faithful to the role of missionary, we strive to hand on our faith by the multiplication of Christians, and the formation of communities and community animators. Aware of the cultural situations in each place, we work for the spread of the Reign of God in the world.

We work for the construction of a world of peace and justice, with a preferential option for the poorest of our sisters and brothers.²⁹

Because of our Alliance with Mary, the members of the Marianist Lay Communities share a common identity and mission, a way of being in community, and a method of building communities.

This Alliance is an evangelizing instrument through which we commit ourselves to:

- Construct from our witness a model of family life that respects the gifts and vocations of each member and where responsible freedom will be the fruit of our love;
- Develop egalitarian communities, in which all are accepted without exclusion or discrimination;
- Reaffirm our preferential option for the youth;

- Take part in the social, cultural, political and economic life in our areas, helping to build the Reign of God in our daily tasks, calling for peace and justice, and denouncing all situations that oppose them;
- Assume our work as an important part of life's experience where the opportunity is given to us to witness to our understanding of life;
- Care for life and work for the integrity of Creation;
- Share with simplicity and humility expressions of faith and community devotion.³⁰

Being in community is an integral and continuing part of our daily lives. Our communities are characterized by a common spirituality and by collaborative decision-making among the members. In this way, our communities differ from groups that only advance a particular cause or provide a therapeutic setting.

Each community discerns its own organization and how it will nourish the characteristic Marianist values within its own cultural context.

Our communities are hospitable. We respect persons and are open to diversity. We invite and welcome new members and guests with joy and simplicity.

Our communities are places for personal and community discernment of membership, lifestyle, and ministry, in the light of both the Gospel message and the Marianist charism. We value development of persons and encourage life-long learning and growth of unique God-given gifts. Individual members and the community as a whole, each with resolutions for future growth, seek to advance in wholeness, maturity, and liberation.

Our communities support and send forth members in their ongoing commitments to service and to bringing about the reign of God. They are a source of motivation and renewal. Our communities are a locus of belonging, friendship, and reconciliation that complements and intensifies daily life in members' families, which are their primary communities.

In community, we develop a critical conscience and learn important skills: methods for starting communities and animating their faith; social analysis and theological reflection—discerning the "signs of the

The interpersonal relationships in our communities can only be understood and developed through an understanding of community as a sacrament of the presence of God and as a manifestation of faith and love among members. Grounding in faith enables us to persist in dialogue, to overcome conflicts, and to discover the forgiveness, reconciliation, service, and love necessary to live our community commitment in its authentic dimension.

Being in community is a source of joy as we experience the presence of God and the signs of the inbreaking of God's love.

We are part of the Church. We experience Church at the local and national level. We offer her our experiences of community life and she sends us forth in mission.

We are a community of life.

We are communities of lay men and women from different countries, living in a multicultural context. We are of different ages, personalities, economic status, jobs, and hobbies. We are committed in all the aspects of our lives: personal, social, political, and economic.

The community is constituted by the freely chosen commitment of its members to be in community and participate actively in it.

The most concrete expression of community life is frequent meetings, gatherings, and celebrations. Members gather regularly and often, at the discretion of the community.

We pray together and strengthen our common bonds. In some gatherings, we renew our commitments in the celebration of the Eucharist.

WE ARE FORMED

How are we, as a community, "attentive to the signs of the times" locally, nationally, and globally? How does our community help its members "to discern and evaluate their personal mission"?

WE PRAY

How does our prayer reflect our call to work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation? How do we "share with simplicity and humility expressions of faith and community devotion"? How does prayer support our work as missionaries?

WE ACT

How do we, as lay Marianists, respond to the signs of the times? How can we "build the Reign of God in our daily tasks"? How can our community "take part in the social, cultural, political and economic life" in our area?

Lay Marianists Are People Who.....

help build and sustain communities of hope

The love of Christ impels us, as it did the first Christians, to form communities with Christ at their center. Our communities are signs of the love of Christ in the world and they prepare us, send us, encourage us, purify us, animate us, and sustain us in our mission.³¹ We live out our faith in communities, following the example of the early church.³²

The Marianist vocation started in groups. Community was one of the characteristics introduced by the founders in the Bordeaux Sodality and the method they used to evangelize was the "multiplication" of communities. Today, Marianist Lay Communities, recognized by the Catholic Church as a private association of the faithful with international rights, can be found around the world and reflect the multicultural diversity of today's Church.

In a time characterized by globalization, competitiveness, and obsession with success, we need a community, a concrete, visible place which responds to the needs of ordinary men and women to belong, to transform the world, and to reflect in depth on the communal dimension of our faith.

We are also members of a Church in which lay people are assuming more responsibility for the Church's mission to bring the Word of God to all people. While we recognize that the Church is engaged in the issues of our times and immersed in the realities of today's world, we are concerned that within the Church itself there is polarization and intolerance. Confronted by these

challenges, and aware that Father Chaminade's message is so relevant today, Marianist Lay Communities are called to respond to them.

In the following five sections, we seek not just to provide a definition of this characteristic of our identity but also to give a sense of how it is lived.³³

We are a community of faith.

We believe that we find salvation, freedom, and justice in and through community. The Trinitarian community—creator, savior, and sanctifier—is a model for communities that are generative, united, and diverse. In Jesus Christ we recognize others as our brothers and sisters, united with Mary in the journey of the people of God.

Our life in community gives meaning to our consecration to Mary and to our following of the founders' teachings. We are communities that live out in depth our alliance with Mary according to our founders' vision. We are communities that develop Mary's spirit and the values she taught.

We choose faith as the center of our lives. We understand faith to have both a personal and community dimension and we seek to share it with others.

We are rooted in the Gospel and attentive to the Word. We need each other as fellow announcers of the Good News. Our faith must be discerned, nourished, celebrated, and lived in community.

For us, community is experienced as gift and task. Community is called forth by the Spirit, and is not only our own work. We understand it as a call by the Spirit, as a vocation, and as a life choice.