



World Council of the Marianist Family

THE “COMMON MISSION” IN THE MARIANIST FAMILY

1. Presentation

The Marianist Family, composed of four branches, the Marianist Lay Communities, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Society of Mary and the Alliance Mariale, has, as such, a mission in the Church.

With this document, its World Council – made up of the General Councils of the four branches – wishes to offer to its members a tool to help them understand the meaning of their mission and to assist them in putting into practice what is common to all. The intention is that at each level of the Councils of the Family the members might discern, promote and carry out the concrete activities of our common mission.

2. Clarifying concepts

The term “mission” means “sending.” A “missionary” is one sent.

- a) The mission, at root, proceeds from God and is a participation in the mission of Christ. In the context of the History of Salvation, mission is linked to vocation. Every vocation carries a “mission,” a sending. God calls in order to “send.”

And every mission is accompanied by a special grace from God.

“Vocation” – “mission” – “gift of the Spirit” go hand in hand.

The “mission,” ultimately, is the salvation of the human person and the one “sent” par excellence is Christ. With him, Mary and all of us Christians are “missionaries,” “sent.” Every vocation and, therefore, every mission have their roots in baptism, through which we are identified with Christ.

In Christ’s sharing of his mission and for the purpose of prolonging it in the world, “particular vocations” – “particular missions” – “particular gifts of the Holy Spirit” (Charisms) are conferred.

- b) The individual vocation (and, therefore, the particular mission), anchored in that common and universal vocation to conformity with Christ, begins to be “particularized” through the call to be in the world to which we are sent according to a specific way of “being” in it and of interacting with it. There are three “ways” in the Church: “lay life,” “consecrated life,” secular or religious, “priestly life.” These are distinguished not only by life-style, but also by the mission confided to each one.
- c) The particular vocation does not achieve its completion here. It is fulfilled through the call to live according to a specific “evangelical lifestyle” (spirituality) and to take up certain concrete “services” (ministries), which embody it.



- d) As it is put into practice on these two levels, the mission is institutionalized. Both the three ways of life and the ministries of the Church are institutionalized. That means that both the call (vocation) and the sending (mission) come about through the specific community, which calls and sends through the established mechanisms: the Church, the parish, the religious institute, the association of faithful, etc. It is the way making real, of incarnating the fact that the mission is a sending and the missionary a person who is sent. No one sends himself.

- e) The “authority” of the institution (community) which “sends” comes from its recognition and acceptance in the bosom of “the” Institution (“the” Community) which is the Church.

3. The “Marianist mission” in the Church

Deriving from the particular way of understanding God’s plan and its realization in the world, inspired by the Spirit in our founders, the Marianist Mission is specified in the “Marianist Family” through each one of the four institutions, the four branches, of which it is composed.

The four branches have common roots, those which derive from their reference to their common origin in the particular gospel vocation of the founders. What is common, what unites us, is the spirituality. This latter carries a special sensitivity to certain aspects of God’s plan and is realized in the specific attitudes and actions which incarnate it.

In a synthetic way we could say that our “common mission” is, precisely, to constitute ourselves and to live as a Family, in a fraternal communion of the diversity and plurality of vocations and ministries. Each one of us, whatever be the branch to which s/he belongs, feels him/herself to be a member of a broader Family and takes to heart the concern for the life and development of the other branches. Through our common Marianist vocation we feel called to contribute to this kind of development of the “Marianist face” of the Church, more fraternal than hierarchical, based on the common dignity which derives from baptism, sensitive like Mary to the needs of the world and, with Mary, unconditionally open through faith to what the Lord tells us.

In fact, coming out of the joyful and hope-filled experience of our fraternal communion, and following the intentions of our Founders, our presence and our action as Family in the Church and in the world have as their fundamental purpose our witnessing to that faith, the faith of Mary, passing it on and forming those around us in it, with particular attention to the young.

4. The mutual relationship among the branches of the MF in the common mission.

This common mission is served through particular vocations which are realized in various states of life within the Church and in different institutions (communities). Each branch has its specific vocation and its own institutionalization. There is no common “authority.” Each one has its own identity and, therefore, its own “authority,” derived from the corresponding recognition on the part of the Church. In virtue of that, it has the capacity to “send.” In this sense, we can say that, on the one hand, the “Marianist mission” in the Church has a fourfold face, that of its respective branches, and on the other hand, it



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presents a common “trait,” that which derives from the fact that the four branches constitute one Family.

From this perspective, it is important that we develop mutual relationships among the branches in the field of the mission. From what has been said, two principles can be deduced:

1. The principle of the autonomy of each of the branches. As to the apostolic institutions engaged in service to the mission, each branch is autonomous and fully responsible for what it promotes and supports.
2. The principle of collaboration and complementarity, which is expressed in mutual help and support.

In some cases, this collaboration is accomplished by working shoulder to shoulder in the same apostolic institution; in others, through collaboration in an institution of another branch or, simply, through participation in support from a distance.

In every case, given respect for the autonomy and complementarity of the branches, and according to the circumstances, in our missionary projects our goal will always be to seek the goal of a mutual sharing of needed fraternal support to enable and develop our common Family atmosphere, such as the characteristics proper to our charism in the life and mission of each branch. In the Marianist mission, the four branches are interdependent. To carry out our Marianist mission in the Church, therefore, we must be present and act as Family.

5. Practical consequences and applications

The first practical consequence of all that has been said up to this point ought to be the concern and mutual assistance for the implantation of the other branches of the Marianist Family wherever at least one branch is already implanted.

The second consequence is the establishment of the Family Council wherever at least two branches of the Family are present in order to strengthen the common mission and to plan for concrete activities, to revitalize it or to move it forward.

In order to help with that planning, we provide a list of areas where we do collaborate as Family, with examples of concrete initiatives accomplished in various places.

- In formation in the charism. The deepening in knowledge and living of the common charism requires, on the one hand, that each branch be interested and involved in deepening that which is proper to itself and, on the other hand, that all the branches collaborate in the promotion of the knowledge and living out of what is common¹.
- In the apostolic ministries, according to availability, to accept the call from the other branches to collaborate in their works or concrete services.
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¹ These are examples of our experience of a common charism. Among others, the work done together in the development of the Continental Centers for Marianist Formation, the “Operation Bordeaux” of Argentina, the web page “*Ágora Marianista*” of Spain supported and managed by the Family Council...



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- In vocation ministry, supporting the promotion and development of vocations to the other branches².
- In the organization of celebrations, meetings and common activities (days of prayer, solidarity activities, pilgrimages, formation meetings, volunteering...)
- In the promotion of the laity in the Church and in the world, with a special attention to the youth³.
- In holding General Assemblies in which all the branches participate in order to analyze, discern and propose concrete activities for the Marianist Family in their corresponding geographical zones⁴.

There are other areas of activity and other initiatives according to the needs and possibilities of each locality. What is important is that each Family Council discerns and decides upon its own plan of action as Family in order to strengthen the Marianist mission wherever we are.

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² Examples: purchase of a property at Quinindé (Ecuador) to bring together the Marianist Family after the departure of the FMI, the Vocation Ministry Committee and the “*Enredate*” project of the Family Council in Spain...

³ Examples: the collaboration in accompanying groups of young people and adolescents as the “Friends of Faustino” or faith groups in parishes and educational institutions...

⁴ Examples: the “*Assises*” in France...