



BEING IN COMMUNITY

PREAMBLE

The identity Statement ratified at the 1st International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities (Santiago, Chile 1993) addresses the community life of MLCs. In this document, "Being in community", we develop this essential feature of our identity and our spirituality.

Moreover, it is in keeping with the agreement approved at our 2nd International Meeting, held in Liria, Spain, that international meetings reflect on the characteristics of the Marianist charism.

Being in community is an essential aspect of the Marianist charism and therefore defines our spirituality. In this document, we seek to clarify, orient, and motivate the present and future MLCs as they face the challenges inherent in community life.

MLCs originated in the communities founded in France by William Joseph Chaminade, who, together with Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous, laid the foundation for the present Marianist Family under the inspiration of God and in alliance with Mary, our mother. 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, MLCs, 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, MLCs are called to respond to them.

This document on community will be developed in 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.



1. **WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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.
- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. 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.
- 1.7. 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.
- 1.8. 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.



2. WE ARE A COMMUNITY OF LIFE

- 2.1. 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.
- 2.2. The community is constituted by the freely chosen commitment of its members to be in community and participate actively in it.
- 2.3. The most concrete expression of community life is frequent meetings, gatherings, and celebrations. Members gather regularly and often, at the discretion of the community.
- 2.4. We pray together and strengthen our common bonds. In some gatherings, we renew our commitments in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. Each community discerns its own organization and how it will nourish the characteristic Marianist values within its own cultural context.
 - 2.6.1. Our communities are hospitable. We respect persons and are open to diversity. We invite and welcome new members and guests with joy and simplicity.
 - 2.6.2. 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.
 - 2.6.3. 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.



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

2.6.5. 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.

2.6.6. 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.

3. **WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT BUILDS COMMUNITIES**

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

3.2. 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.

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

3.4. 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.

3.5. 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.

3.6. 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.

- 3.7. 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.
- 3.8. Each group is an ongoing mission in itself and each member is missionary, especially when actively working to create and extend the community.

4. **WE ARE A COMMUNITY "IN PERMANENT MISSION"**

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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.
 - 4.2.1. Our experiences in community prepare us for mission.
 - 4.2.1.1. Prayer opens us to God's action and increases our sensitivity to the needs of others.
 - 4.2.1.2. Formation deepens our understanding of God's love for all people and the need for liberation.
 - 4.2.1.3. The community life builds, deepens, and enlivens our relationships with others.
 - 4.2.2. We support the involvement of our members in a variety of ministries in the world.
 - 4.2.2.1. As missionaries of Mary we are community builders in those fields of action in which we are involved.
 - 4.2.2.2. We especially encourage members to live the Gospel fully in the public arena.



4.2.2.3. We encourage persistent missionary actions by members, other communities, the Church, and the world.

4.2.2.4. We are open to and support new apostolic initiatives.

4.3. 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.

4.3.1. 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.

4.3.2. We give special attention to initiating and sustaining MLCs in which young people are welcomed.

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

5. **WE ARE A WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY**

5.1. MLCs 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.

5.2. MLCs are organized in different levels: local, national, regional, and international. All members are invited to participate at all levels.

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

5.4. 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.

5.5. MLCs 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.

**MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITIES
ARE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
THAT COLLABORATE IN MARY'S MISSION
TO BRING CHRIST TO THE WORLD.**



• *Document ratified by the General Assembly at the Third International Meeting of the Marianist Lay Communities which took place in August 2001 in Philadelphia, United States of America.*