



Marianist Lay Communities

Chapter 18

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The Rise of Marianist Lay Communities

Since the early 1900s, a significant development for Marianists has been the gradual reappearance of adult lay communities. This development into the twenty-first century is traced in the following short chronology of events.

General History	
1920s	Mass Leagues, members were the parents of SM and their purpose was to support perseverance of their sons in the order. During spiritual and social gatherings, collections would be held to raise money to have Masses said for the brothers. These Leagues were located in Detroit (1921) and Baltimore (1925) as well as other cities. Membership later included people other than parents.
1930-1948	Chaminade Clubs: Baltimore (1939), Dayton (1944), International Meeting (1948). (<i>see also</i> : Marianist Co-workers: Miriam Guilds, Parents' Groups)
1946	First Teacher Institute held as result of new enthusiasm among SM for high school Sodality. At this first meeting, it was decided to publish a magazine called <i>Marianist Sodality Moderator</i> . John Dickson was the first editor.
1947	Sodality Secretariat, an office to coordinate the high school Sodality efforts of the Cincinnati Province and link these two groups of adults forming around Marianist interests. Gabriel Rus and John Dickson provided leadership.
1948	Marcy I was held in Marcy, NY. Pivotal meeting of high school sodality moderators. Participants were committed to embody Chaminade's vision by starting and sustaining high school Sodality.
1940s	Rise of CEMI (<i>Congregación-estado de María Inmaculada</i>) in Spain and <i>Consacrées</i> in France (very much like the State)
1950	National Association of Marianist Organizations (NAMO) established. Gabriel Rus headed this organization as it was an outgrowth of the Secretariat. First Sodality Convention for high school sodalities was held in Pittsburgh (November). Largely drew its members from the Cincinnati Province, although the St. Louis Province was always welcome.
c. 1957	Marianist Leagues and groups of spiritual affiliates 1956, Spiritual Affiliates in Cleveland 1957, Marianist League of Cincinnati (October) 1957, Marianist League of Pittsburgh (September) 1957, Marianist League of Philadelphia (May) ? Marianist League of Greater New York (Fr. Landolfi reports they were in full swing by 1968)
1958	Sodality moderator training at Marcy, NY (April) Sodality camp for high school sodalists (June)
1950s	The Pacific Province had a very active Marianist League and Affiliates. After that, some attention shifted to lay communities (Memo from Joe Stefanelli, SM, July 2011) Affiliation groups began in the St. Louis Province in the 50s and flourished in the 60s. Fathers Ade Windisch, SM, and Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, were especially active. Many other religious assisted, providing ways of learning and practicing spirituality. (Memo from Dave Fleming, SM, July 2011)

1959	National Office of Marianist Sodality established. Kevin O'Reilly headed the center in Chester, PA—in NY Province space.
1962	Marcy II.
1963	Reorganization of the UD Sodality. Hugh Bihl spearheaded the renewal of post-high school Sodality after John Dickson, former head moderator of UD Sodality, became Provincial.
1966	US Statistics: 306 members in eight adult Marianist Lay Communities. Foundation of Marianist State Community in Cincinnati, Ohio, in January.
1968	Cincinnati Province Adult Sodality Moderators' Council starts
1969	Within the St. Louis Province, deeper commitments to lay communities began under the impetus of Father Quentin Hakenewerth, SM. Several long-lasting groups emerged. Often Catholics in the area of San Antonio sought new kinds of parish communities and gravitated to Masses and meetings of Marianist lay groups. Many St. Mary's University students were highly involved. (memo from Dave Fleming, SM, July 2011)
1970	LIFE Camp begins in St. Louis Province Chaminade Community House was founded in San Antonio, TX. Marianist religious and religiously minded lay students of St. Mary's University focused on developing and serving emerging MLCs. Dave Fleming, SM, was first director, followed by Ed Jach, SM. Held daily evening Mass for MLC members, planned retreats and meetings, tried to involve other religious in this work. Also, invited Affiliates to share in community gatherings and some did. (memo from Dave Fleming, SM, July 2011)
1970s	Formation of the <i>Fraternités</i> in France (MLCs) Beginning of Marianist Associates in New York Province Start of Marianist Voluntary Service Communities Dayton, Cleveland, St. Louis, New York, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh LIFE Camps begin in Cincinnati Province The Pacific Province created a Marianist Lay Board composed of two religious and two lay members—Lisa Cater and Gary Chapman. Their task was to inform and inspire the brothers about the existence of lay Marianists and lay communities. They visited each religious community several times. They also encouraged the brothers to help form lay Marianist communities among the people with whom they had frequent contacts, especially parents of religious, alumni of the schools, and lay teachers. (memo from Joe Stefanelli, SM, July 2011).
1971	St. Louis Province Family of Mary Service Commission starts.
1980s	Rise of the <i>Movimiento Marianista</i> in South America.
1985	First Marianist World Day of Prayer—initiative of St. Louis Province lay groups
1995	Heads of three branches in North America meet in December to form Marianist Leadership Team.
1996	World Council of the Marianist Family formed

1998	Marianist Social Justice Collaborative officially began after several years of conversation among those in Marianist family involved in social justice issue about its formation. Dick Ullrich was first director. He was followed by Jim Vogt, who continues in the position.
2000	First National Assembly of the SM in the United States; June 29 to July 1, Chicago. Lay observers invited.
2004	Alliance for Marianist Lay Formation first gathered in Baltimore to help discern the future of lay formation in the Marianist family. The meeting was convened and sponsored by the Society of Mary's Office of Religious Life.
2005	First gathering of Marianist Lay Formation Initiative (MLFI) group (January). Program's first director was Joan McGuinness Wagner. Currently led by Pati Krasensky. Purpose is to provide formation for lay Marianists interested in beginning new or animating current Marianist Lay Communities.

Marianist Lay Network of North American (MLNNA) History

1991	Mandate to establish Marianist Lay Network of North America (MLNNA) formulated at 2 nd Continental Assembly.
1992	Directory of Marianist Lay Communities published by NACMS (for all of North America) Statistics: over 2300 members in 72 MLCs (compare with 1966)
1993	Incorporation of MLNNA in Texas (September)
1996	First writing workshop held by MLNNA: St. Louis, Missouri <i>(Just) Do Whatever He Tells You</i> Formation of the International Council of the Marianist Family in Rome (June). Often referred to as the World Council of the Marianist Family.
1998	2 nd writing workshop held by MLNNA: Cupertino, California <i>(Just) Do Whatever He Tells You Together</i> First meeting of Leadership groups of three branches in North America (Marianist Conference, Provincial Council of FMI, and leadership team of MLNNA) to form Marianist Family Council. Meeting held in St. Louis.
2016	MLNNA changes name to MLC-NA (Marianist Lay Community of North America)

Presidents of MLNNA

Tony Garascia (2 terms: July 1997--June 2003); Marge Cavanaugh (2 terms: July 2003-Dec 2007), A.J. Wagner (1 term: Jan 2008- June 2011); Rudy Reyes (1 term: July 2011-14); Michael Wasno (July 2014-)

Change in Presidency that would have happened in July 2007 was extended as the election was delayed for six months—voting switched from elections taking place at Continental Assemblies to mail ballots.

Continental Assemblies of Marianist Lay Communities (open registration)

1988	1 st Continental Assembly of Marianist Lay Communities of North America (St. Louis: Washington University) Theme: “Seeds for Tomorrow’s Church” Keynoters: Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Joe Holland, Dr. Margaret Cavanaugh
1991	2 nd Continental Assembly (Dayton: University of Dayton); meets jointly with SM General Chapter Theme: “Connections” Keynoters: Gary Chapman, Carol (Quinn) Ramey, and Anna Huth (then FMI) Mandate to establish Marianist Lay Network of North America (MLNNA) given.
1994	3 rd Continental Assembly (San Antonio: St. Mary’s University) Theme: “Opening to the Future: People of Culture; People of Justice” Keynoters: Robert Coogan, Michael Cowen, Trudy Snetsinger, Alejandro Velez First officers of MLNNA recommended.
1997	4 th Continental Assembly (Baltimore: University of Maryland) Theme: “The Church of the Future: It’s NOW!” Keynoters: Brother Steve Glodek, SM; Dr. Una Cadegan, Father John Walsh, MM First “election” of MLNNA held.
2000	Joint Assembly MLNNA, SM, and FMI (Dayton: University of Dayton) Theme: “The Marianist Mission: A Passion for Faith and Justice.” Keynote: Megan McKenna with responses by Jack McGrath, SM; Evangeline Escobar, FMI; and Tony Garascia. (In effect, 5 th Continental Assembly).
2003	6 th Continental Assembly (St. Louis: St. Louis University) Theme: “Becoming a Community of Communities.” Keynoters: Dr. Margaret Cavanaugh, Father David Fleming, SM, Scott Appleby, Tony Garascia. 15 th Anniversary of the first Continental Assembly in United States.
2006	7 th Continental Assembly (San Antonio: St. Mary’s University) Theme: “Come to Cana: Many Stories, One Table, One Family” Keynoters: Jacqueline Landry and Neomi DeAnda
2010	8 th Continental Assembly (Honolulu: Chaminade University of Hawaii) Theme: “ <i>Ke Aloha</i> (to love and respect one another), <i>Ka Pono</i> (justice and fairness), <i>Ka `Ohana</i> (family and community).” Keynoters: Pi’ikea Hardy-Kahaleo’uni, Jeannie Pinpin, and A.J. Wagner
2014	9 th Continental Assembly (San Antonio: St. Mary’s University) Theme: Keynote: Gregory F. Augustine Pierce, is the publisher of ACTA Publications in Chicago and a past president of the National Center for the Laity.

International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities (IO/MLC) History

mid 1990s	Regional Council of International MLCs and regional meetings held.
1993	Formation of International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities (IO/MLC) in Rome in November. First informal gathering of those responsible for the MLCs, the SM, and the FMI met. No decisions were forthcoming from this meeting, but it offered common orientation and gave direction to animate shared mission. (Precursor to World Council)
1994	North American Regional Council of IO/MLC meets in San Antonio (July)
2000	March 25, Marianist Lay Communities received canonical approbation as a Private Association of the Faithful from the Pontifical Council for the Laity. A period of <i>ad experimentum</i> was approved for five years.
2001	Statutes for IO/MLC as Lay Association adopted. Since 2001, representatives from the IO/MLC have been invited to attend chapter meetings of the SM and the FMI.
2005	Permanent status as a Private Association of the Faithful was requested. At its November meeting, the International Organization of MLCs (IO/MLC) met with members of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.
2006	The IO/MLCs is invited to send two delegates to a Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities. The congress ended with an audience with Pope Benedict XVI (December).
2008	The IO/MLC is asked to send a delegate to International Women's Congress sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. The Congress was held to celebrate the 20 th anniversary of <i>Mulieris Dignitatem, Woman and Man; the Human in its Entirety</i> .

Presidents of IO/MLC: Enrique Llano (Spain: 2 terms: 1993-1997 and 1997-2001); Carlos Beneitez (Argentina: 2001-2005); Tony Garascia (United States: 2005-2009); Isabella Moyer (Canada: 2009-2013); Félix Arqueros Pérez (Latin America: 2013-)

International Convocations of Marianist Lay Communities (delegate structure)

1993	First International Convocation of Marianist Lay Communities. Santiago, Chile: <i>Identity</i> document produced
1997	2 nd International Convocation of Marianist Lay Communities. Llira, Spain: <i>Mission</i> document produced: worldwide statistics reported at 512 communities with 5,726 members
2001	3 rd International Convocation of Marianist Lay Communities. Radnor, Pennsylvania. Document on “Community” was written.
2005	4 th International Convocation of MLCs: Bordeaux, France. Document “Alliance with Mary” was written. The MLC Region of Africa was formed at the Assembly in Bordeaux, France.
2009	5 th International Convocation of MLCs: Nairobi, Kenya, August 2-8. Theme and document: “Marianist Communities in the Church and World.”
2014	6 th International Convocation of MLCs: Lima, Peru in January 26 to February 2, 2014 (IO/MLC Team terms to be extended six months.) This event will celebrate the 20 th Anniversary of International Assemblies for lay Marianists. Topic: “Faith of the Heart in the Heart of the World”

Significant Documents/Texts to MLC Development

1901	Publication of Simler’s biography of Chaminade
1916	Volume 3 of <i>The Spirit of Our Foundation</i> appears
1938	Ferree’s <i>Apostle of Mary</i> articles on the historical equivalent of the Bordeaux Sodality
1940	One of the earliest versions of Ferree’s first Synthesis uses the term “Family of Mary,” (perhaps, for the first time) with its current meaning of the ensemble of the SM, the FMI, and all Marianist Lay Communities. By the 1980s, the terms “Marianist Family” and “Family of Mary” were being used interchangeably to designate this reality.
1958	Ferree’s “Family of Mary Diagram” developed—see page 208 of BHMS 2010-2011
1960	Hoffer’s Circular No. 11, “Extension of the Family of Mary”
1967	Family of Mary explicitly mentioned in new SM Constitutions
1981	Family of Mary defined officially in Book 2 of <i>Society of Mary Rule of Life</i>
1982	Family of Mary defined officially in <i>FMI Rule of Life</i>
2010	Circular 1 from the President of the IO/MLC, Isabella Moyer “Being Marianist, Being Community” (June 2010)
2011	Moyer’s Circular 2: “Marianist Lay Communities and the New Evangelization” (June 2010)
2012	Moyer’s Circular 3: “Marianist Lay Communities: An International Community of Communities” (June 2012)
2013	Moyer’s Circular 4: “Faith of the Heart in the Heart of the World” (May 2013)
2014	Future Challenges: 2014-2018

Characteristics of Marianist Lay Communities and Lay Marianists

(Created by the “Alliance for Marianist Lay Formation” in collaboration with the MLNNA, April 2009)

More than 200 years ago, in France, the Marianist Family was founded by Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, Venerable Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, and Venerable Marie Thérèse de Lamourous. Today, these founders offer a spirituality and witness through which Christians can live out their baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to transform the world into his image.

These seven characteristics of Marianist Lay Communities and Lay Marianists tap into the deep wisdom acquired from a 20-year journey that birthed the International Organization of MLC, the Marianist Lay Network of North America (MLNNA), and the ecclesial recognition of Marianist Lay Communities as a Private Association of the Lay Faithful. The sources of this document reflect the rootedness in our past, the conversations of the present, and our vision for the future.

At the heart of the Marianist charism is Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus, and her role in the mission of her Son. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Chaminade experienced being formed by Mary to continue her mission of bringing forth Christ in his person and message as good news for the world. Members of the Marianist Family identify with this experience and seek to act personally and to build institutions and organizations in ways that embody that same insight. The Marianist Family gathers, prepares, and sends members to bring about the reign of God, experienced as human dignity, freedom, justice, solidarity, and reconciliation for all persons.

Entering into the mystery of the Incarnation is the source of spirituality and discipleship for the Marianist Family. Members continue to discover new ways to enliven and embody the five characteristics that manifest the charism in everyday life: faith of the heart, permanent mission, Mary’s inspiration, community-in-mission, and discipleship of equals. These manifestations of the charism can be seen in laity and in vowed religious.

Formation for mission takes place through belonging to and actively participating in a Marianist community or a communal environment created by Marianists working together, for example, to advance social justice, education, or spiritual development. Members grow through openness to the influence of the community and by acting in ways that create communities that motivate, provide direction, and act in faith for social transformation. In this way, members of the Marianist Family are called by God, formed by Mary, and sent for mission.

Characteristics of Marianist Laypersons and their Communities

Among those called to the Marianist Family are laypeople who experience the spirituality and approach to ministry of the Marianist charism as their way of living out their baptismal commitment and “being Church.” Consistent with the characteristics manifested by all members of the Marianist Family, there are seven characteristics of lay Marianist life that have been identified and elaborated by the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities. They are also consistent with the recognition of Marianist Lay Communities by the Catholic Church as a Private Association of the Lay Faithful with international rights.

Lay Marianists and the Marianist Charism

1. *Lay Marianists grow in understanding of the founders of the Marianist Family and how the Marianist charism is gift both to the Church and to the larger world.*

Marianist Lay Communities and individual Marianist laypersons are part of the worldwide Marianist Family inspired by the charism of its founders. Ongoing study of the founders, their spirituality, and their life choices, shapes the missionary vision of lay Marianists and challenges them to devote their personal and community lives to actions that would result in a more just and compassionate world.

Lay Marianists and Mary

2. *Lay Marianists grow in understanding of and relationship with Mary.*

Lay Marianists discover Mary in the Scriptures and are inspired by her Magnificat to care for the poor and to reject violence. Their approach to works of mercy and justice is framed by Mary's attitude of listening to the Word of God, openness to God's spirit, acceptance of the will of God, simplicity, hospitality, and fidelity. They ally themselves with Mary in her faith, in her love for Christ, and in her mission. Lay Marianists ordinarily express their commitment of bringing Christ to the world in the midst of their community or other public setting.

Lay Marianists and Community

3. *Lay Marianists help build and sustain communities of faith and hope.*

In a time characterized by competitiveness, violence, and individualism, communities provide a visible place that responds to the needs of ordinary men and women to reflect in depth on their faith and to sustain their hope for the future. Members are engaged with each other and share values they hold at the center of their lives. For Marianists, communities are the favored means of evangelization and effecting social transformation. At their best, they are, as Chaminade dreamed, a "spectacle of saints" and a sign that the Gospel can be lived in all its vigor. Lay Marianists invite and help people build communities that increase sensitivity to the needs of others and sustain the involvement of members in a common mission and a variety of ministries.

Lay Marianists and the Mission of Jesus

4. *Lay Marianists embrace the mission of Jesus that is expressed in Scripture: "Do whatever He tells you." (JN. 2:5)*

Lay Marianists, as individuals and as communities, express their commitment in dedicating their time, skill, energy, and resources to a variety of activities that promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. They work together with other parts of the Marianist Family, lay and religious, in these shared, persistent priorities. They strive to hand on their faith through forming communities and acting as community animators. As laity, they express their commitments in their family lives, in their workplace, and in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of their society.

Lay Marianists and the Church

5. *Lay Marianists grow to be a prophetic sign within the Church*

Lay Marianists and Marianist Lay Communities, together with the entire Marianist Family, are a gift to the Church and a prophetic sign of its Marian dimension. All around the world, they offer this gift to church organizations, activities, and parishes in a special way whenever their way of life and ministry reflects values for inclusivity, equality, participation, dialogue, solidarity, sensitivity, affection, patience, and courage. Differences within the community are recognized, appreciated, and reconciled in “one great family.”

Lay Marianists and the Spiritual Life

6. *Lay Marianists grow in prayer and faith.*

Lay Marianists seek to embody the Marianist Charism in their lives to respond generously to God’s call, as Mary did. They are concerned about self-knowledge, discernment, and spiritual growth. They make an ongoing commitment to personal and community prayer, listening to the Word, openness to spiritual guidance, and celebrating their faith through the Eucharist. This commitment increasingly transforms their lives and impels them to realistic and effective service to and action for others.

Lay Marianists’ Contribution to the Marianist Family

7. *Lay Marianists give time and talent to the Marianist Family and give treasure to support the lay organization.*

Lay Marianists are consciously connected with Marianist Family groupings in their local area or beyond. They see themselves as members of a “community of communities.” They are active contributors to lay communities and their development or to one of the many education, formation, or justice ministries of the Marianist Family on a local, regional, national, or global level. Communities are self-supporting and determine a means of sharing community expenses. Lay Marianists, either as individuals or as community members, contribute as appropriate to the general expenses of Marianist organizations, in particular the Marianist Lay Network of North America (MLNNA) and the International Organization of Marianist Lay Community (IO/MLC).

Being Marianist, Being Family

Circular #1
Isabella Moyer, President, International Organization of MLC
June 12, 2010
Immaculate Heart of Mary

Introduction

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

It is with humility and joy that I offer this reflection on our Marianist family spirit. I have much uncertainty and fear in my responsibility as the new President of our International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities. But, my faith and confidence are strengthened by the prayerful support and friendship in our global Marianist family, a true family spirit. In recent years, I have seen our family spirit grow in its lived reality, and I believe this is an exciting moment in our history.

Much hard work has been done by the past four leadership teams, led by Presidents Enrique Llano Martinez, Carlos Benítez and Anthony Garascia. We are now a canonically recognized Private Association of the Faithful. We have defined our identity and our mission. We have affirmed the role that community has in our lives. We have embraced our alliance with Mary as both our reason and our means for who we are, what we do, and how we do it. We have matured as an international ecclesial movement, and this maturity was apparent in our 5th International Meeting of MLCs in Nairobi, Kenya, last summer. In Nairobi, we were inspired by the hospitality and good works of our brothers and sisters in Africa. This deepened our desire to strengthen our global connections and to find new ways to share our resources. The presence and loving support of our FMI Sisters and SM Brothers encouraged us to work together as family. We made the commitment to intentionally share the gift of our Marianist charism with the Church and the world. And, we acknowledged the need for all countries to support our work by contributing to the financial support of our International Organization on an annual basis.

One of our greatest gifts is the deepening understanding that to *be* Marianist is to *be* family. In our MLC Statutes and in each of our international documents we proclaim with pride that we are united in one spiritual family with our brothers and sisters of the Society of Mary, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and the Alliance Mariale. There is a growing desire in all four branches to explore this family spirit together, to go beyond nice words and warm sentiments to practical collaboration in mission and life. We are realizing that this family model, given to us by our founders, is both prophetic and timely for today. This circular is not a theological treatise, for I am not a theologian. And our Marianist historians are better qualified to describe the evolution of our understanding of family spirit. What I can offer is my own experience as a lay Marianist woman and my hopes for our Marianist Family. I have been blessed with dear mentors who have formed me, a community who prays with me, and a diversity of experiences and enriching conversations within our Marianist family. And I have been gifted with the love of David, my husband, and our five children, Luke, Claire, Anna, Benedict, and Grace. They have been my greatest teachers of family life and family spirit!

Family Roots

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade believed that the intimate relationship of family was present within the Bordeaux Sodality by virtue of each member's baptism and special consecration to Mary.

It is a community of fervent Christians who, in order to imitate the Christians of the early Church, strive by their frequent meetings to have but one heart and one soul and to form but one single family, not only as children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ and members of his mystical Body, but also as children of Mary, to be devoted to her through a special consecration and a public profession of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception. . . . All rules and practices of the association, all the general and particular duties, and even the proselytizing spirit animating the Sodality, emanate from this consecration to Mary Immaculate.¹

Being family was more than a metaphor for the organization of the Sodality. As a community of baptized women and men, members were sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. By consecrating themselves to Mary, they sought to be more perfectly formed by her in the image and likeness of her Son. Together they presented to the world a spectacle of a people of saints, a faith-filled spiritual family that would draw others to Jesus by their own joy and example.

Today, we acknowledge the common roots and charism of our Marianist Lay Communities, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Society of Mary and the Alliance Mariale by referring to ourselves as the Family of Mary or Marianist Family. The intentionality of being one spiritual family with four branches has deepened and grown in our recent history.² It is acknowledged in the very first words of our first MLC international document,

Marianist Lay Communities are Christian communities at the service of the mission of the church in the world. We are part of the Marianist Family and are inspired by the charism of our founders, William Joseph Chaminade and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon.³

As an ecclesial movement, MLCs are not unique in belonging to a larger spiritual family. Many religious orders such as the Dominicans, Benedictines, and Franciscans have a lay branch, a third order, or oblates. We are not unique in using the family terminology to describe the relationship among our members. But our model of family is unique.

We see the Marianist Family as our natural way to live out our faith in community. It is an intuition that is appropriate for the Marianist Charism. We particularly appreciate the horizontal nature of its structure, in which Marianist Lay Communities, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, the Society of Mary and the Alliance Mariale live and grow interdependently based on their unique Marianist vocation, in union without confusion.⁴

¹ From *William Joseph Chaminade, Founder of the Marianists*, Joseph Simler, SM, p. 131. Translated by Joseph Roy, SM. Marianist Resources Commission, Dayton, Ohio, 1986. Translation of *Guillaume-Joseph, fondateur de la Société de Marie et de l'Institut des Filles de Marie*, published in 1901 by Victor Lecoffre in Paris and by Féret in Bordeaux.

² See Eduardo Benlloch, SM, *Chaminade's Message Today* (Dayton, Ohio: NACMS, 2001). Benlloch provides a brief overview of our understanding of the Marianist Family in the second half of the 20th century. (pp. 100-118)

³ *Identity of Marianist Lay Communities*, (1993), §1.

⁴ *Marianist Lay Communities in the Church and the World*, (2009), §2.1.

We are still learning how to be a family that effectively lives “union without confusion.” We are still learning how to be interdependent, to discern creative and effective means of collaboration while respecting the uniqueness of each branch. Interdependence requires a careful balance, and it can be difficult work. Yet, with all its struggles and challenges, it is a valuable lesson to learn and to share.

Family Roles

Traditionally, families have been formed on a paternalistic model. The head of the household, usually the father, is responsible for making decisions for the good of the family and enforcing his decisions. Other family members are assumed and expected to obey him, to submit to his authority and abide by his decisions. This paternalistic family structure has been the basis for many leadership models in society. Today, we recognize the weaknesses of such paternalism, even the most benevolent. It denies others freedom and agency to be part of the decision-making process, and it is too static to allow for changing roles.

A healthy family provides a secure, loving environment that nurtures the gifts of all members and supports and promotes their growth into the fullness of personhood. A healthy family recognizes the need for clear roles and responsibilities, but acknowledges that these can change. A healthy family will embrace and use all its gifts to accommodate the changing needs of each family. Our Marianist Family provides such a model of being family. We believe that

Each branch understands itself and is revealed to itself in the others, who are an integral and complementary part of its own being and acting. As a result, we understand ourselves as a spiritual family with a structure which unites laity, religious men, and religious women on a basis of equality.⁵

It has not been easy to achieve this spirit of equality while affirming our diversity. The rebirth of Marianist Lay Communities, from the 1950s onward, coincided with the Second Vatican Council’s call for more active participation of lay men and women in the Church. As the laity began to assert their presence, “growing pains” were often apparent. As new roles were embraced by some, old roles were difficult to shed for others. A similar transition occurs within a family as children enter into adolescence. The years preceding the fullness of adulthood are difficult. But the rebellious independence of the adolescent may be nature’s tool for leaving behind the security of childhood. Maybe it is a necessary step toward *interdependence* as parents and children struggle to let go of past roles and seek new relationships.

This transitional stage is reflected in our Church and in our Marianist family as lay women and men seek more meaningful involvement in all aspects of church life. To counteract the traditional, authoritative model of parent/child we, as lay men and women, are sometimes overeager in asserting our autonomy. And, some clergy and religious cling to or yearn for the old parent/child relationship with the laity. Clearly defined roles within a static, hierarchical model can be more comfortable than dealing with constant transformation and change. This is why change often produces a backlash of fundamentalist thinking and nostalgia for the ‘good old days.’ But, as every good parent knows, there is no going back to the days of childhood.

It will continue to be a challenge to live as spiritual family with a true spirit of equality. Together with the Society of Mary, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and the Alliance Mariale, we are realizing that family roles are, indeed, dynamic—as they are in all healthy families. With regular and intimate dialogue, we are able to acknowledge each of our gifts and respond collaboratively to our changing needs as a family and to our changing needs in the Church and in the world.

⁵ *Statutes of the World Council of the Marianist Family*, §1.3 and 1.4.

**Marianist Lay Communities:
An International Community
of Communities**

Circular #3

Isabella Moyer

President

International Organization of
Marianist Lay Communities

June 26, 2012

Immaculate Heart of Mary

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Greetings on behalf of our International Team of Isabel Duarte Quapper (Latin America), Félix Arqueros Pérez (Europe), Susan Vogt (North America, Asia, Australia, and Ireland), Ernest Kasongo (Africa) and Brother Domingo Fuentes, SM (Assessor). Our team is in the second half of our mandate, and preparations have begun for our 6th International Meeting.

Marianist Lay Communities have a long history, beginning with the Bordeaux Sodality in 1801. The history of our International Organization is much shorter. The first International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities took place in February, 1993 in Santiago, Chile. At this meeting, delegates from around the world formed an international organizational structure to connect and support our Marianist Lay Communities around the globe. The first International Team was elected, with Mr. Enrique Llano Martínez as President.

We are approaching the 20th anniversary of our existence as an International Organization. Our greatest success is our growth and maturity as an independent lay branch within our Marianist Family and our church. We have strong, committed communities around the world that form women and men of faith and action. Each year our Regional Responsibles report of new social justice works and foundations.

We are empowered by our independence as a Private Association of the Faithful. And, we are supported and strengthened by our interdependence with the Alliance Mariale, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and the Society of Mary in a true spirit of family.

One of the greatest challenges is to encourage each MLC, each Marianist lay woman and man to experience both the joys and the responsibilities of being part of a global family. We acknowledge this challenge every time we hear the question, “Why do we need an International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities?” or, “Why must we support the International Organization?”

The topic for this present circular was proposed by our team. We hope it will be a source of reflection on our current situation, and promote dialogue on how we can improve our connectedness in the future. May

we open our minds, hearts, and arms to embrace our reality as a truly international community of communities.

Why do we need the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities?

When we ask “why do we need?” we are often asking “what will it do for me?” We value independence and self-reliance. And, this is good.

The concept of subsidiarity respects the right to make our own decisions, to choose the ways and means best suited to our individual circumstances. We affirm this in our international documents and statutes. We describe who we are and what we do in general terms that unite us. We do not demand specificity of action as proof of our identity. We respect the diversity of our cultures and acknowledge the freedom, dignity, and responsibility given to each one of us.

But, we are also called to work together for a greater whole.

The complementary partner to subsidiarity is collegiality. We believe that we were created not only for ourselves, but for the other. For Marianists, this belief is reflected in our love of community. We know that we cannot attain our full potential when our focus is on ourselves alone. We are called to a greater communion, so we build community. We are formed and nurtured within community. And we are sent out in mission with the support of our community.

But, we are also called to look beyond our own community. We can do more as part of a ONE that is made up of many. So, we organize our Marianist Lay Communities around the world in local, national, and regional structures depending on geography and numbers.

And, we have a structure to organize us on the International level. The International Organization allows us to:

- Network and share the good news of Marianist Lay Communities around the world, and to offer support in times of need.
- Have an official voice within the universal Church.
- Gather delegates from around the world to meet, discern, pray and celebrate as an Assembly.
- Support new MLC foundations around the world.
- Represent Marianist lay women and men in the World Family Council.

Networking and Communications

The main work of Marianist Lay Communities is done at the grass-roots level. Networking and communicating this work is the major task of our International Organization. We share news to help connect our Marianist Lay Communities across the miles. This has a two-fold purpose; to inspire others and to support each other.

Methods of communication have improved immensely in the past twenty years. We use Skype, Facebook, Twitter, and emails to communicate with each other. National websites reflect the Marianist experience in other countries. Online resources allow us to share and distribute formation materials in a quick and cost

effective manner. Language barriers are overcome with the help of translation software. Newsletters no longer need to be printed and mailed. They can be sent with the click of a computer button.

The role of the International Organization is best understood as a portal for communications from the regions. We have a very simple website (clm-mlc.org/). The purpose of it is to provide links to all our national and regional websites. We also have a blog (clm-mlc.org/blog/), a Twitter account (@CLM_MLC), and a Facebook page to share current news and promote discussions.

We still face many challenges in our communications. It takes time and energy to provide updates on a regular basis. Ideally, we would have a communications team that would be responsible for collecting and distributing information for us. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our communications, or if you are able to help us, we encourage you to contact any of our Team members.

Private Association of the Faithful

Marianist Lay Communities were granted *ad experimentum* status as a Private Association of the Faithful on March 25, 2000. The definitive approval of our Statutes and formal confirmation of our status as a Private Association of the Faithful was granted on February 22, 2006.

It was an immense task to petition the Vatican for official canonical status. During the preparatory work, Mr. Enrique Llano Martínez and his team sent a question to all Marianist Lay Communities. Is it important for you to be recognized as a Private Association of the Faithful within the Church?

I was the MLC responsible for Winnipeg, Canada at the time, and we were struggling with an authoritarian bishop. I knew that having official recognition in the church would be valuable to us on the local level. It would mean that our existence in the diocese would not depend on the benevolence of the local ordinary or priest.

Having official canonical status is important. It is our community 'passport' into the Church when we introduce ourselves to local bishops and priests. This is especially helpful in geographical areas that lack a strong Marianist presence, or when a new foundation is begun. Our International Statutes and Decree of Ecclesial Recognition are both available on our website.

The International Team maintains regular contact with our friends at the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL). At our last meeting in Rome on October 31, 2011, we discussed the joys of celebrating the Chaminade Year with our Marianist Family. We also discussed the Circular, *Marianist Lay Communities and the New Evangelization*. It was a timely conversation with the upcoming October 2012 Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization and the Year of Faith, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the start of Vatican II. We discussed the role that our charism has in the New Evangelization. We also spoke of Chaminade's teaching of Faith of the Heart, and the importance of having a personal faith and love of God that moves us beyond doctrine to action. We received much affirmation for who we are and what we do.

Privileges of Official Status in the Church

Our official status allows us representation in ecclesial gatherings on national, continental, and international levels. This representation is a valuable opportunity to dialogue as lay women and men in the Church. We have sent delegates to

- the 2nd International Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities (Rome, 2006),
- the 5th General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (Aparecida, 2007),
- the 2nd and 3rd Congresses of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities of Latin America (Bogota, 2008 and Paraguay, 2010), and,
- the International Women's Congress, Woman and Man: the *Humanum* in its Entirety (Rome, 2008).

We will also have a Marianist delegate attending the Pan-African Congress of Catholic Laity (Yaoundé, Cameroon, September 2012). Mr. Ernest Kasongo, our Regional Responsible for Africa, will be representing us.

Our friends at the PCL also assisted us in acquiring scholarship funds for our International Meeting in Nairobi.

Responsibilities of Official Status in the Church

Canonical status also comes with responsibilities. Because the Pontifical Council for the Laity is responsible for our official recognition as a Private Association of the Faithful, any changes that we make to our Statutes must be approved by them. We also send copies of our formal documents to the Council.

Some of us come from culture where the independence is highly prized. Some of us have had difficult experiences with Church authority. Wouldn't it be better to be independent?

It is important to remember that Blessed Chaminade, Mother Adèle, and Marie Thérèse were faithful sons and daughters of the Church, And, so are we. Having official recognition means that we must be careful of what we say and do when we speak and act in the name of our Marianist Family.

Yes, we desire a church that is more inclusive, egalitarian, concerned with justice and peace. We desire a church that is more open to the gifts of women in her leadership. But, we are not a group that acts loudly or protests strongly. It is a good thing to have to weigh our words carefully. As Marianists, we are called to embrace and model dialogue and not debate, for there is already too much angry and loud debate in our world and in our church. Dialogue calls us to listen with an open mind and an open heart and to speak with a voice that is respectful even when it is challenging.

International Meetings

Every four years we gather as an Assembly in an International Meeting of Marianist Lay Communities. It is the responsibility of the International Organization to plan and convene the Assembly, the official decision-making body of all Marianist Lay Communities around the world. The Assembly discerns the direction of the International Team and proposes the challenges for the next four years.

Participants at our International Meetings never ask “Why do we need to belong to an International organization?” When we gather in one place, a glorious spectacle of women and men from all corners of the world, we know instinctively the beauty of an international community. We are surrounded by the colors of multicultural fabrics and flags. We hear the wondrous sounds of many languages. Our hearts dance to a diversity of rhythms and beats. And we celebrate the liturgy in a multitude of traditions while praying as one.

For some, interest in our International Organization is present only when an International Meeting is announced. It is important, therefore, to ask ourselves these questions.

What support have we given to the International Organization since the last meeting? If we sent a delegate, did our delegate(s) share the news of our international reality with our local communities? If our country asked for a scholarship for costs of sending a delegate, what have we done in return?

Has our country, through our National Responsible, kept in contact with our Regional Responsible? Have we sent reports when requested? Have we shared the news and documents that have been set from the International Team? Have we tried to communicate with other communities in our country, our region, in other parts of the world? Have we given financial support for the work of the International Organization through the paying of regular dues? (The formula for paying dues to the International Organization of MLC equals one hour’s salary per year per member. While respecting the diversity of our economic reality, the act of paying dues is a sign of support for the work of the IO-MLC).

Our International Organization does not exist only once every four years. The gifts and tasks received at our International Meetings are meant to be shared by all, to help build the bonds across the miles; to help build an international community of communities.

New MLC Foundations

A recent reality is the founding of new foundations by Marianist lay women and men. Haiti is a wonderful example. The Marianist presence in Haiti with lay communities founded by Agnes Dumas, a Haitian woman who fell in love with the Marianist charism while studying in Fribourg, Switzerland. Soon after, the Society of Mary generously formed a new foundation of brothers to support the Marianist presence in Haiti.

Marianist Lay Communities in Spain provided formational and communal support to our new Marianist Lay Communities in Poland.

The seeds of our Marianist charism are presently being sown in Indonesia and Cameroon with the efforts of two Marianist lay men.

The benefits of having an international organization are apparent. A new foundation needs prayerful, formational, emotional, and sometimes financial support from older, more established communities. By sharing the news of emerging foundations, this networking and support can happen.

To see our charism through the eyes of another culture weaves richness into our spirituality and celebrates the diversity with our Marianist family. As an international community of communities, we are challenged and inspired by the zeal of new foundations.

Members of the World Marianist Family Council

Over these past 20 years, we have grown in our understanding that our local communities are part of a greater entity. We are part of a worldwide spiritual family consisting of four branches, reflecting different lifestyles but with a common historical and spiritual foundation. Recent decades have seen the MLC branch grow in self-realization and autonomy while acknowledging the interdependence rooted in our family spirit.

Marianist Family councils are a concrete sign of this interdependence, a model of collaborative leadership as a discipleship of equals. The International Organization is the official representative of the Marianist Lay Communities to the World Marianist Family Council. (The official website of the World Marianist Family and the World Marianist Family Council is found at www.marianist.org).

At our Family Council meetings, we share our own international reality with the global reality of our sisters of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and the Alliance Mariale, and our brothers of the Society of Mary. We report on our successes and our challenges. We seek ways to support each other in our mission, and vision together as a Marianist Family. We also work to promote the Family Council model on the local, national, and regional levels.

Conclusion

The work of the International Organization, and the work of all our local, national, and regional organizations, depends on the support of each and every Marianist Lay Community. We need to communicate regularly, to know the successes and the challenges on the grassroots level.

We need to know what we are doing well, for we all need mutual encouragement. And, we need to know how we can improve our efforts in sharing and supporting your successes, and responding effectively to your challenges.

Strong organizational structures also need good leaders, and this is the responsibility of us all. If there is no interest in the leadership of a group, there is no interest in the group. Discernment for leadership must be ongoing, and not a hasty decision when an election is announced. Potential leaders must be constantly identified, mentored, empowered, and supported.

We have reached a moment in our history where ever greater tasks can be undertaken if we seize the opportunity and move forward, together, in daring faith. Our international Marianist family is part of church and world that challenge us to think globally. We are well positioned to do so. As Marianists we will always gather in community, for this is the basis of who we are. This is where we are nurtured,

formed, and sent. But we are also called to look outward with ever-expanding horizons, to build a truly international community of communities.

We know that our prayers join those of Blessed Chaminade, Mother Adèle, Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, and holy Marianist women and men who have gone before us. We go forward in faith and confidence knowing that Mary is always at our side, for it is her mission that we embrace, to bring Jesus into a world so in need of God's love, justice, and peace.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

Be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

Amen!

Number of International Marianist Lay Communities (2015)

 Country	# of CLM/MLCs	# of Lay Marianists	National Responsible
Argentina	22	250	Luisa Maria Conforti & Maria Silvia Pironio
Australia	1	6	Julie Aherne
Austria-Germany	5	49	Helga Zerbes
Brazil	7	75	María de Lourdes Perezim de Mattos
Canada-Quebec	5	36	Josée Roberge
Canada-Winnipeg	4	38	Judy Wagner
Chile	83	770	Angélica Iturriaga & Humberto Manosalva
Colombia	14	109	Carlos Cuartas
Congo Brazzaville	2	*55	Maman Cathy
Congo Kinshasa RDC	17	*315	Zephyrin Kasongo
Cote D'Ivoire	6	*225	Marie Louise Memeledje
Ecuador	9	70	Juan Semblantes Leon.Cristobal
France-Belgium	52	476	Helene Carlon
Haiti*	7	120	Saul Damestoir
India	6	53	Sanjay Kumar Saraiya
Italy	12	197	Cherubina Coppola
Japan	11	74	Atsuyuki Yanagawa
Kenya	3	43	Lorna Mueni
Korea-Incheon Korea-Seoul	25	222	KIM Jeon-hee (Marisofi) & LEE Sebastian
Malawi	12	144	Chrissie Simukoko
Mexico	15	102	Clemente Guitierrez Cuevas & Maria Prieto
Peru	40	200	Carlos Montalván
Philippines	2	15	Johneleen Lardera-Garonita & Noemi Ardon
Polania	2	12	Ryszard Koszczyński
Spain-Cemi	16	180	Rosalía Sanchez Alonso
Spain-Madrid	34	384	Oscar Iglesias Calvo
Spain-Zaragoza	59	454	Irene Miñon Ruiz de Ubago
Switzerland	7	50	Roland Carrupt
Togo	12	150	Komi Agbezou
USA	92	1432	Mike Wasno
Zambia	1	13	Francisca Jeref
TOTALS	583	6319	
*2014 Numbers			
Camerous (emerging)	1	28	Cyrille Ebabe
Ireland	0	1	Susan Buckley