

Sharing Our Marianist Stories Ep. 16 Transcript

Commitment to Community (with Carol Ramey, Ann Hirt, Patti Gehred, Gabby Bibeau)

00:00 - Carol Ramey

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00:37 - Patti Gehred

Welcome to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. I'm Patti Gehred.

00:42 - Gabby Bibeau

And I'm Sr. Gabby Bibeau. Well, once again, we're excited to present today's podcast to you all, which is an interview that we recorded in July 2017, with Ann Hirt and Carol Ramey. Some of you may know Carol Ramey as the previous Director of NACMS. This was recorded probably about nine months after she stepped down. She retired from being the Director of NACMS. But both of them are pretty much lifelong members of the Marianist Visitation State Community and other Marianist communities. Patti, you're the one who interviewed them. What were your thoughts listening back on this interview that you did?

01:30 - Patti Gehred

Well, I really enjoyed this. Probably one of the easiest interviews ever because we sort of based this - We had the option of doing it like "Story Corps" (like NPR does), where people interview each other. And that's what Ann and Carol wanted to do was interview each other, mostly Ann interviewing Carol. But I do remember, you could see the love and faith that they share. They've been through a lot together as members of this Marianist lay community, the State Visitation Community, and just listening to their friendship, it was just endearing at the time and even more so now.

02:15 - Gabby Bibeau

For those of you who don't know, the Marianist Visitation State Community is a lay community in the United States. They take a vow of stability every year, and they really see as their vocation supporting the Lay branch of the Family. Now, the Visitation State Community, they're all over the United States. So, they gather in person twice a year. So, because of that, many of them have local communities. And Anawim [Marianist Lay Community] in Cincinnati, that was one of their communities that Carol and Ann belong to.

02:50 - Patti Gehred

I've heard Carol tell lots of stories about the Anawim Community, the work they did as young people. This is when they were single, and then they were getting married and having children and still trying to make a big difference in the community they lived. So, when they talk, you can hear humor, but they're also honest about the reality that things were hard. Sometimes there was

schisms within the community. It wasn't easy. And I think, again, that's where their faith came in. They just had such faith that was driving them, and that it was more than them, and that they could lean on. And they also talked a lot about Mary. When Carol talks about Mary, she welcomes other people into that relationship. She's the first person I heard really take Mary off the pedestal and talk to her as a companion. And I think Ann's the one that asked her to share her relationship with Mary. Well, and then Gabby, how was it for you to listen to this story of - At this point, it is 50 years. They said it was 48 or 49, but this 50-year commitment to each other and the Marianist Family and the State Community?

04:14 - Gabby Bibeau

I was really inspired by their commitment and how they've stuck with it. I think that there's a lot of growth that can happen in a person and in a community when they [and/or] you really decide to commit to something and to stick with that even throughout difficult times. And I was glad that she mentioned some of those difficult times. I hope that other Lay Marianists listening to this can learn from that and also be inspired to deepen in their commitment. Well, we hope that you enjoy listening to this podcast and so here is Carol Ramey and Ann Hirt.

05:06 - Ann Hirt

I'm Ann Westendorf Hirt, and I have been part of the Marianist Family for 50-plus years, I think.

05:16 - Carol Ramey

My name is Carol Ramey and I, too, have been with the Marianist Family for about as long as I can remember. As soon as I got to UD [University of Dayton], it was just a matter of days before I was invited to get involved. And I said "yes," so.

05:35 - Ann Hirt

And you continue to say "yes," Carol. So, we were talking a little bit about who was the first Marianist who invited you, or how you got involved with the Marianists, and we had a Sodality at UD.

05:52 - Carol Ramey

Sr. Mary Louise [Foley], I think, was the first person that had invited me, and it was very soon after I arrived on campus. And she and I just ran into each other on the sidewalk, and we started talking, and she said, "Would you like to get more interested or involved in some of these things?" and I said, "Why not," because I was 17 years old and thought it would just be a way to make friends and know more people.

06:26 - Ann Hirt

I was a commuter student at the University of Dayton back in 1965... And so, you were a sophomore when I started. And you were like, an RA resident?

06:37 Carol Ramey

Yeah. I was an RA. I was on one of the floors in Marycrest [Hall]. Yeah.

06:42 - Ann Hirt

And I always thought you were - I always looked up to you, Carol, and so we did in a way, I think, we must have met when I was 17. You were 18 or something, or 18 and 19, maybe? But we were both involved in the [UD] Sodality, and really we've been involved in communities together for a long, long time. We were involved in the Anawim Community in Cincinnati in the - I'm trying to think - in the 80s, I know. I mean, we were involved in this - we've been involved in the Visitation State Community for close - we're not quite 50 years yet, maybe 48 years. I'm not sure how many.

07:25 - Carol Ramey

But the State Community is peopled by persons that have decided that this is an ongoing, lifelong commitment, and so we take a vow together. And we have two retreats a year, so we don't spend a lot of time face-to-face with one another. It's just twice a year that we meet. But there's a lot of ways that we found to interconnect...

07:50 Ann Hirt

...especially with technology now...

07:51 - Carol Ramey

Given the technologies really been good. Like I said, we just get together twice a year. So, our primary focus, I think, is on our local community. And the State Community is in support of the vow that we take. So, the retreats that we have generally are in themes to help us to look at the vow or to choose why... what we've done to try and be stable in that commitment or develop that commitment or invite people...

08:27 - Ann Hirt

And how we live it out. And it's a lot of building community wherever we go, but then also being faithful to a deep spiritual life as well. But when we take our vow, we all have an individual - what should I say, "expression." We have a vow ceremony once a year. But everybody doesn't say the same thing. You know we...

08:54 - Carol Ramey

[We] Have a common prayer in the beginning, and then there's a sentence that we begin at. "Commit myself in the Spirit of Mary," and then we say what it is at that time in our life that we are particularly working on that we feel like the vow impels us to act.

09:17 - Ann Hirt

And I think a number of people who have been in the Visitation State Community have really made conscious choices to build the larger Family of Mary, the larger Lay Family. I think of Tony Garacia and Marge Cavanaugh and Beth Garacia and Joe Cavanaugh, who really put a lot of effort into what we see today. I mean, I know, I'm not saying they were the only ones who started something like the big assembly that we have. But they've put an awful lot of energy into

that. And then other members have put energy into the International Lay Marianist Community. You were talking about some of the other Marianists who influenced you, Carol ... I mean, you did say to me there were lots of Lay Marianists throughout the years who have influenced you very, very many. I mean, I think of Joe Cavanaugh, who is now deceased, and Marge Cavanaugh. And Marge is head of our community now.

10:13 - Carol Ramey

They were our teachers, really. They were really-well steeped in Marianist history, Marianist spirituality, and they were our teachers in many, many ways.

10:24 Ann Hirt

They really read widely, just very brilliant people, and so committed to building the Lay Family of Mary. I mean, oh my goodness, very, very much leaders, wouldn't you say?

10:39 - Carol Ramey

Very much so, yeah. Yeah. And it's some sacrifice to their lives. I mean, they both were brilliant people and led really pretty challenging jobs. But they still made room for all of this Marianist work, and they were just very good at it so.

11:06 - Patti Gehred

What was your big outreach? Was it when you were in Anawim?

11:13 - Carol Ramey

Pat O'Brien was a woman that we got to know, who was profoundly disabled, but she had spirit, and drive, and humor. She was an amazing woman, and the community worked very hard to incorporate her into the community as best we could, given her limitations. And the story we tell is about the time we decided to go on a camping trip and she said, "I want to go," and we're thinking "Oh, how are we going to do this?" And anyway, she did bring her attendant with her, but when it came time for her to go to bed, she said that "You do know that the head doesn't go down into the sleeping bag." You know she was worried that we were going to put her in backwards, you know. So, Pat was a wonderful person, and a lot of the people in the community did all kinds of things to support her [from] her isolation that her disability put on her. It was just a wonderful experience.

12:18 - Ann Hirt

Our children, too. I remember wheeling Pat around in the wheelchair, and she was holding my daughter – your [Carol's] goddaughter - Debbie in her lap. And you were especially close to Pat, and you were deeply moved by her when she passed away, too. You were there... And you had a van, I think. I mean, just getting her in and out of the car with her wheelchair.

12:42 - Carol Ramey

We would take her in the van just about everywhere we could. It was a big van, and my husband at the time had made planks so that we could push the wheelchair up into the van. And then, we

had blocks to stabilize it. And so, we took her and a lot of places with us, mostly to church, but also like the camping trip, and we would do special things with her, too. So, that was a really big part of Anawim for a long time was attending to her.

13:18 - Ann Hirt

And then we had talked about Anawim housing, and I think we may have left town around the time that it was started. But I know Gail Miller got really involved in it, and I think it was housing in northern Kentucky, and it took a lot of energy. Another thing that we were involved in was visiting Lebanon Correctional Institution with Mark Schnieder. We'd go to the prison for Mass, and that was quite an experience. And Anawim is still around. I mean, Anawim is strong still... I know, Carol, you have given many, many talks over the years to so many different groups. We were talking about who Mary is for you and what's your relationship like with Mary. I was saying I don't think I personally pray to Mary the way I wish I did, and that's probably something I need to say "yes" to. But I was just wondering if you could tell us a little bit about how you relate to Mary... I think you had mentioned you imagine yourself sitting on a bench with Mary.

14:28 - Carol Ramey

I just... I do pray with Mary, and I put myself in a wooded glen, and there's a bench there. And Mary and I are just sitting there on the bench together talking. And I just talk to her about the different aspects of her life, with her son and all that she went through. You can go through the list of all the mysteries, and... every one of those stories is just really profound. And her role with her son... it really was a part of my spiritual life all along the way. Because I just kept thinking about... throughout her son's life, how she found ways to stay in touch with him, and I think still continued to guide him in some ways and learn from him. And then, of course, at the end, her standing at the foot of the cross. It just still moves me to tears... You just can't imagine the horror of watching your own son suffer like that and die. So, it's just a very powerful, powerful experience that I revisit a lot of times in prayer.

15:55 - Patti Gehred

So, how do you think being members of the Marianist Family supports your relationship and friendship now?

16:02 - Carol Ramey

Well, I just can't imagine life without it, you know. I mean, it's that strong. I mean, some of it is the personal relationships that we've built out over the years.

16:13 - Ann Hirt

The friendships are really strong... My mom just recently passed away about six weeks ago, and just the support and the messages, just really loving and supportive of each other. And we've all gone through difficult times, every single one of us, I would say.

16:34 - Carol Ramey

And I think it's pretty amazing, because we don't see that much of each other, really. I mean, our local communities are important to us, and our families are... And so, we have lots of parts of our lives so, but this is an element that is just very strong and powerful. And even though it is the time we spend together or the ways we spend time together are few and far between, it works. We've stayed together so... And I have to say, it wasn't all blissful. There were times where the community was on the verge of falling apart, and some people did leave the community. We had some disagreements over the vow and the meaning of the vow. And so, it wasn't all peaches and cream. It was hard work. We ran into some rough spots.

17:32 - Ann Hirt

I mean, to me, it's been a struggle in some ways to stay involved. I didn't always want to go to retreats. I'm kind of an introvert. But I know it's something that I was called to do, and I guess we said "yes," right. And sometimes, saying "yes," is pretty tough.

17:50 - Carol Ramey

Sometimes the thing we make a joke about, I mean, women tend to live longer than the men do. And so, at some point we came up with this thing about that when we all get old, we're going to have this house together, and it's going to be the home for tired women. That was the name of it, and so none of us are there yet, but the day may be quickly approaching.

18:14 - Ann Hirt

We've been talking about it since maybe the 70s, I think.

18:18 - Carol Ramey

We've been tired for a long time. But no, but it is a nice image to think that we've gone through so much life together that in old age, we would hope we could stay connected in some way, too, that we don't get separated into disperse nursing homes and never see each other again.

18:39 - Ann Hirt

Which one are you going to, Carol, so I can sign up?

18:45 – Carol Ramey

It'll be Trinity.

18:46 - Patti Gehred

Well, I just want to thank you, because I was hoping more of this would happen, and you can just sense the friendship, and you can tell there's more than just friendship. There is whatever that spiritual component is. You can feel it. And I think that's what...

18:57 - Carol Ramey

Yeah, we have a common bond that is deeper than just friendship. Yeah. So.

19:01 - Ann Hirt

It's love, it's love, respect, and care.

19:13 - Patti Gehred

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