

Sharing Our Marianist Stories Ep. 10 Transcript

MSP 2.0 - 2017 Five Silences (with LeeAnn Meyer, Kay Stone, Mike Bennett, Maureen Hoock, Beth Garascia, and Diane Browne, Patti Gehred and Gabby Bibeau)

00:00 - LeeAnn Meyer

When you think about the *Silence of Words*, you know, we teach our children, “These are nice words, and these are not nice words.” But to go further and say, “These are words that really describe our family,” or “let's make a word cloud that kind of shows what we want our family values to be and what words we would use in our house that support one another.” You know, go around even with little kids and ask them what they want to pray for and how to use their words in a form of prayer. A lot of this is not just about being silent, but how to use your words, how to use your expressions for good as well.

00:45 – Patti Gehred

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

00:49 - Gabby Bibeau

And I'm Sr. Gabby Bibeau. So, we're really excited to bring you guys this latest podcast, which is about our MSP 2.0 program, which we had last year. This podcast is a series of interviews of a number of people who participated in the program, and they talk about the projects that they created. We want to give you just a little bit of an idea of what that program was like, what the theme was, and we hope that you might find some of that interesting. So, NACMS sort of cooked up the idea of MSP 2.0. I wasn't around for the discussions about starting MSP 2.0. So, how did that start? What was the reasons for that, and what were the hopes for that?

01:36 - Patti Gehred

The Marianist Studies Program, people that were part of that back in the 70s and even early 80s, they still talk about it. They still talk about their experiences. There's a lot of materials that were created in those times that we still use. With that program, people would come to gather at one space and stay together for a few weeks. It was a summer program. And that's just not something we could offer, and it's just not the way people's lives are right now.

02:04 - Patti Gehred

So, we thought, how can we create a program that invites the Marianist Family from across the country? And we kind of came up with this MSP 2.0, because that's what you do know and when things are just changed a bit, and we thought, “Well, let's use technology. We'll make the program a year long, meet once a month, try to work with people that we know their schedules are very busy.” We wanted scholarly work. We wanted new writing. We wanted new insights. But we also wanted to build a community of scholars. So, when we first put this out there, we were hoping - we had our fingers crossed - we would get four people. So, when we had 13

people, we were surprised. We rearranged things, had two different cohorts that eventually all met. And I believe the results are better than we had even previously hoped.

02:56 - Gabby Bibeau

So, the MSP 2.0 program last year was all about the Five Silences, and I believe the name of the program, was...

03:08 - Patti Gehred

It was “Five Silences: Marianist Mindfulness for the 21st century.”

03:13 - Gabby Bibeau

So, some of our listeners might not know about the Five Silences, but Father Chaminade in his writings, he sort of left a spirituality, and the entire like system of spirituality is commonly called the System of Virtues. And the first part of the System of Virtues are the Five Silences. And they are *Silence of Words*, *Silence of Mind*, *Silence of Signs*, *Silence of the Imagination*, and *Silence of Passion*. But Patti, could you tell me, why did you all pick the “Five Silences and Marianist Mindfulness?” What made you pick that topic?

03:53 - Patti Gehred

Well, we thought there would be a lot of interest, for one thing. But also, we felt it's a gift that the Marianist charism has for the Church, especially because of all the social media that we ingest and then the constant 24-hour news cycle. And once you get exposed to the Five Silences, it helps you look at news, world events, social media and put it in its proper proportion. And so, people that are familiar with it are really excited by the Five Silences. But if you don't truly understand it, there's some misconceptions as well.

04:36 - Gabby Bibeau

I think we hear “silences,” and we think it means emptiness or nothingness, and Father Chaminade didn't speak about it in that way. Like *Silence of Words*: it wasn't just about never speaking, but it was how we use our words. So, here [is] a selection of interviews from the program participants, and it might give you an idea of which of their projects you'd like to check out.

05:07 - LeeAnn Meyer

My name is LeeAnn Meyer, and I am now living in Dayton, Ohio. So, my project is about helping families incorporate the Marianist charism into their daily life. And I was really excited when I saw NACMS advertise this opportunity a couple summers ago, when the Lay Marianists hosted an Assembly. I presented with my husband, Brandon, and another Lay Marianist couple, David and Danielle Weickert, about how to incorporate some aspects of the Marianist charism into family life, and just how to raise our kids in a way that Marianist practices are just naturally

part of who they were. And the presentation was really well supported. And a lot of people said, “This is so important, and this is so awesome.” And that was right around the... time that NACMS started advertising this opportunity to be part of the Marianist Studies Program. And I thought, “What a cool topic to really dive into, to take the Five Silences and apply it in the home life for parents and for children.”

06:12 - LeeAnn Meyer

And so, I really struggled with what kind of structure to use and what kind of end-product to come up with as a parent. I don't do a lot of reading, like I just said [off-mic], and I don't really have a ton of time for my own personal prayer, let alone to really be intentional. But that's what I want to do. I want to be intentional with my kids. And so, I thought, “What will parents actually use?” I didn't want to make a book, and I didn't want even really super long videos. I wanted it to be a way that parents could kind of pick and choose from different resources that would be most appropriate for their own families. And so, the end product is kind of this - I mean it will be on a website. So, they can click links and they can kind of see what works for them.

06:56 - LeeAnn Meyer

But I broke it into each of the Five Silences. And so, I only so far have completed the *Silence of Words* and the *Silence of Signs*. My hope is to do the other three as well. But providing some scripture passages, some prayers that can kind of get them a general explanation of what the *Silence of Words* and *Silence of Signs* means. And then, yeah, scripture passages, some video links, some podcasts, and activities that they can do, hopefully with kids of all ages to just introduce them to the topic in a very approachable, practical way. I tried to make suggestions of different prayers. I've also got some feedback from other families who do some of this in their daily life as well. They submitted prayers or just practices that they do around Advent, Christmas, Easter that I incorporated. And [I] share a little bit about what my husband and I are doing with our kids now as well. But then, just like I said, fun activities.

08:05 – LeeAnn Meyer

You know, when you think about the *Silence of Words*, you know, we teach our children, “These are nice words, and these are not nice words.” But to go further and say, “These are words that really describe our family,” or “let's make a word cloud that kind of shows what we want our family values to be and what words we would use in our house that support one another.” Activities [such as] take a week and just every day write a post-it note to someone in your family and leave it in the house. Or, you know, go around - even with little kids - and ask them what they want to pray for and how to use their words in a in a form of prayer. A lot of this is not just about being silent, but how to use your words, how to use your expressions for good as well.

08:47 – LeeAnn Meyer

And so, in *Silence of Signs*, I talk a lot about using your body, your movement - again just the things you're doing every day as a form of prayer. I hope that the project inspires Marianists everywhere to really start thinking about how we are passing on this information to our children, even at a young age. And obviously, my children are really young right now. But, you know, teenagers, young adults, how are we passing on the charism, the Marianist practices, the System of Virtues as a whole to our children in a way that makes sense to them in the moment and in a way that it just naturally becomes part of who they are.

09:28 - Diane Browne

I'm Diane Brown and I'm from Philadelphia. I actually have two projects. One is a book that I have almost completed, and it's called *Invitations to Peace*, and the other is a *Things Marianist*, and it's on repairing the world using the Marianist spirituality, particularly the Five Silences. And both of those projects are centered on repairing ourselves first, and then through our alignment with God, then we repair the world.

10:03 – Diane Browne

Through my research, I discovered the concept of “Shalom.” There is no English word that conveys *peace* very well. So, we go back to the Hebrew word “Shalom,” which means a comprehensive peace, a peace that goes beyond the individual to the community, the nation. It is about a wholeness, a completeness, a lack of nothing. Everything is in order. There is happiness, there's joy, there's healing. It's indeed the peace that Jesus gives us that the world cannot comprehend. And so that will probably be my lifelong work, to continue to understand this peace that we don't have much of at all in this world, and how to bring that more about in us.

11:05 - Mike Bennett

My name is Mike Bennett, and I live in Dayton. I participated in MSP last year, and given our topic for that year on looking at the Marianist Silences from a lens of Marianist mindfulness, I had the idea of creating a guided retreat for undergrad students at the University of Dayton. That would be a five-day guided retreat where each day would take one of those Silences. But instead of looking at it from the language of *silence*, look at it from a language of mindfulness, still giving full respect to what the Silences are and how they play a role in the System of Virtues, but just kind of reframing those in a language that might be a little bit more contemporary or applicable to college students today.

12:02 - Mike Bennett

What I've tried to do with each of the Silences is pair them with a more contemporary author. That might be a theologian or just a researcher. So, for instance, Brené Brown or Ronald Rolheiser are two people that have some resources that I've paired with each. So, an example is that in Brené Brown's book *The Gifts of our Imperfection*, she has one chapter that's on calm and

stillness, and how to embrace that. And so, as I was reflecting on that portion from her, it struck me to pair that with *Silence of the Mind* and to do that from an angle that talks about how we might handle anxiety and stress within our society today, especially for college students. And so, each of the Silences then - that one in particular - instead of calling it *Silence of the Mind*, then, instead calling it *a mindfulness of calm and stillness* and kind of pairing those two concepts together, to just kind of reframe how people see like the full meaning by reframing just those terms of what *Silence of the Mind* can mean.

13:15 – Mike Bennett

It was my hope in creating this that I would put together like a written form of this retreat, per se, that would include some morning prayers and then just understanding the concept of mindfulness paired with that notion of silence. And so, in doing that, having that written copy, then my hope was also to produce like a podcast form that would basically be just an audio version of that prayer experience and the text itself to give people who might be not college students or might not be on our campus, or really anyone who's interested the capability to really engage in this experience.

13:59 - Maureen Hoock

My name is Maureen Hoock, and I am from St. Louis and a member of the Growing with Mary Marianist Lay Community. So, the project that I'm doing, the title of it is *Confronting White Privilege Through the Lenses of the Five Silences and Marianist Mindfulness*. So, it's looking at what white privilege is and then considering how the lenses of the Five Silences and Marianist mindfulness change both what we see and how we respond.

14:36 - Maureen Hoock

I've been on this path of discovering about privilege and racism for about five years. I know the exact moment that I stepped onto the path, but until this program started last August, I really had no idea what I was doing on the path. After the very first meeting and just taking time and praying and stuff like that, [I] just really heard the Holy Spirit say, "Let's look at white privilege." A lot of white people in my experience are not comfortable talking about privilege because we don't understand it. There's so much guilt and shame and fear around the concept, and I think even about dismantling it because white people are afraid that if somebody else has something to gain, it's got to mean that we've got something to lose, and it's not really about that.

15:32 - Maureen Hoock

So, I think when we look at the Silences - for example, *Silence of Words* - when I'm with somebody who makes a racist joke, I can no longer just ignore it because it would be uncomfortable to confront it. I have to say something. In my imagination, I hold space for a time when racism is not the part of our world that it is, when privilege is a part of everybody's life,

and it doesn't have anything to do with the color of your skin or any of those other things that right now give privileges to certain people over others.

16:16 - Maureen Hooch

I've written a paper. I'm in the process of putting together a PowerPoint. I'm really feeling like the PowerPoint is going to be the instrument that's going to be used. I think it's something that Marianist Lay Communities can use, that the Brothers and Sisters can use, that college and high school classrooms can use, that Acts communities and other parish programs can use to have a really important discussion. So, my hope is that this paper and this PowerPoint can initiate conversations that can move us as a discipleship of equals who are on mission to bring the Family of Mary and the world together and to more peace.

17:09 - Kay Stone

My name is Kay Stone, and I am from Orlando, Florida. And my project with the MSP 2.0 program deals with technology and how it impacts all of us, but in particular our young adults. The Silences is something that's always intrigued me and been very helpful in my life to reflect back on. Because I know in my personality, I need to practice the *Silence of Signs* a whole lot, and sometimes *Silence of Words*. Well, actually, all of them, but those two in particular. And so, I was intrigued how they could be combined with mindfulness in our current situation and times.

17:59 - Kay Stone

I think we've become a culture for instant gratification. We are used to everything happening instantly. And wherever one goes, if you look around - whether it's a doctor's waiting room, people at long stop lights - they're checking their phones. They're looking because they don't want to waste these few precious moments. It's our society. And so, I think the Silences and to hit the pause button and stop, take a time to breathe, to pray, to consider our current situation, evaluate it. Where do I need the Silences? A good prayer in the morning would be to ask, "Jesus, Mary, the Holy Spirit, give me the time to consider the Silences when I'm faced, especially, with frustrating situations during the day."

19:02 - Kay Stone

To draw on an experience I had at St. Anthony Parish, working with our then-pastor and one of the best friends I've ever have had in my life, Fr. Charlie Oyabu. He was probably the poster-person for Marianist mindfulness. And he could be fully engaged in being very busy in the parish, and then come middle of the day, he would disappear, and then he'd reappear. And [being the] "Type A" person that I am, I would in the beginning say, "Where were you? We were so busy." He said, "Well, it was time to pray. And now I'm back, and I'm renewed, and I've had my time to pray and reflect and meditate. And now let's get going again." And to me, that is Marianist mindfulness. He taught me so much.

19:52 - Beth Garascia

My name's Beth Garascia, and I'm from South Bend, Indiana. I was originally introduced to the idea of the System of Virtues by [Bro.] Hugh Bihl when I first met the Marianists - which was probably at least 50 years ago when I was in college - and I found them to be very helpful. But since then, I now live in South Bend, as I said, and so there are no Marianist Brothers, Priests or Sisters there. So, I've kind of gotten away from practicing them specifically in my daily prayer, in my daily reflection. And I thought this would be a way of returning to them with more fullness, with a greater fullness and enriching my spiritual life.

20:38 – Beth Garascia

I decided to do my project on “Woundedness and the System of Virtues.” Because I was really attracted to the idea that we are all wounded. And I really love Henri Nouwen, and so I think I had read his book already, *The Wounded Healer*. And so, I was really attracted to the idea that we are all wounded, and in getting in touch with our woundedness, we can recognize woundedness in other people and walk with them. Not that we can heal them, but we can walk with them. And thought that the Silences would be a very helpful way, a solid connection, between the way the Silences as a way of quieting our imaginations and our passions and so on, and our words would be a way of enriching that process.

21:30 - Beth Garascia

I ended up reflecting a lot on my family of origin and the negative patterns and the positive patterns that we have in terms of the Silences. So, I think anybody who struggles with their family of origin might find the paper helpful. But it's been really cool to be in the NACMS office and just kind of feel surrounded by, I don't know, the spirit of people who have worked here in the past and who have submitted papers. People I've heard about and know very well, like Hugh Bihl and [Bro.] Larry Cada and other people that I don't know very well at all like [Bro.] John Totten. And it's been also very cool to walk through the stacks. I want to do that some more before I leave today, and just kind of see the titles of all the papers and then the ones that I'm interested in. Just kind of noting that and thinking, “Wow, just so many people have given so much in so many different ways to the Marianist Family.”

22:32 - Gabby Bibeau

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. We both highly recommend that you check out our website which is www.nacms.org, which is new by the way, you won't recognize it.

22:48 - Patti Gehred

Also new to our web page will be information about the program itself. So, if you click on the link to MSP 2.0, you'll see a description, some of the background, and an application will be coming soon for next year. So, keep checking in.