

Sharing Our Marianist Stories, Episode 26 Transcript  
Who Are the Marianist Saints? – with David Betz, SM

**0:00 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

The major key is that you invite people to pray to these holy people, men and women, to intercede for us. We have to pray to them individually. And I think part of what I write in these things is inviting people to pray, inviting people to just have that faith.

**0:30 – Gabby Bibeau**

Welcome to Sharing Our Marianist Stories. I'm Gabby Bibeau. Those of you who are regular listeners will notice that I'm introducing our podcast solo today, and that is because Patti Gehred, who has been my co-host for the past five years or so – since we started this podcast – recently retired from her position at NACMS. And so, we're very happy for Patti and grateful for her service to NACMS. We miss her on the podcast, but you won't have to wait too long before hearing from her again because right after Patti left – or right before she left her position here – she and I sat down for a podcast interview. And we actually interviewed each other about our time at NACMS [and] things coming up in the future. So, that will be our next podcast episode, so stay tuned for that in the next month or two.

**1:41 – Gabby Bibeau**

But in the meantime, I am so pleased to be able to share with you this interview that I did last month with Bro. David Betz, who is a Marianist Brother currently living in Dayton, Ohio, who is the promoter of the Marianist saints here in the United States. So, his role is to educate people about the Marianist saints – which, technically, none of our Marianist holy people have been canonized, but are Marianist “Blesseds,” “Venerables,” “Servants of God,” and others who are in the road to sainthood. So, it's a really interesting conversation. He talks a lot about his job as the promoter of saints, speaks about some saints in particular, because there's quite a few of them, and most people, I think, don't know about the lesser-known ones. So, it's very interesting to hear him talk about that, and I think many of you will enjoy it. So, without further ado, here is my interview with Bro. David Betz.

**3:02 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

My name is Bro. David Betz. I've been a religious now, officially, since 1986, so approximately 37 years. I presently live here in Dayton, Ohio. I am the assistant director to our healthcare community at Saint Leonard's. I've been working with our healthcare community since November 1st, 2021. But I'm originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and raised with six other siblings - good German-Serbian family.

**3:40 – Gabby Bibeau**

Thank you. So, you have this work at the Brothers' healthcare center as you mentioned, but you have another job as well, which is the reason that I asked you to come talk to us today. So, could you share a little bit about what that job is?

**3:56 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well, I'm presently considered the promoter of our Marianist saints here in the United States. I was approached by the Assistant for Religious Life and ever since Paul Landolfi passed –

because Paul Landolfi was the promoter of the saints here in the United States for quite some time – and when he passed, they approached me and I said, “Why not?” Which, I was really surprised I said, “Why not?” because I was not too much of a follower of saints. But this was a challenge, and this gave me an opportunity to do what I needed to do to educate myself about saints and the process of canonization and various other things associated with it.

#### **4:46 – Gabby Bibeau**

So, what's involved with being a promoter of Marianist saints? What do you do, specifically, in this job?

#### **4:55 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well, part of my job is to make sure that the saints are *out there* here in the United States and through various ways. One way is what I write in the *Family Online*, which is what we called Marianist Moment, and this is an opportunity to share the good news about our Marianist saints. That's the predominant mode that I use. I'm in conversation, of course, with a small committee in St. Louis to try to create ways to invite younger people to be involved with getting to know our saints better. So, I do try to do some collaborating with Fr. Oscar [Vasquez]. I'm collaborating hopefully with NACMS in some ways to promote the saints at this present time. I work with also Fr. Al McMenemy [who] has been very interested in this work as well, because he's approached me with a possible miracle – *possible*, you know, of somebody being healed from cancer, a young man. But at that present time that's on hold...

#### **6:14 – Gabby Bibeau**

You mentioned before that you didn't know very much about the Marianist saints before you were asked to be the promoter of saints in the US. So, what is some of the learning you had to do since then?

#### **6:27 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well, I had to understand who our Marianist saints were. At this present time, we have approximately 16 people in what we call, “on the road to sainthood.” And they're mostly European. Of course, our Founders, you have Fr. Chaminade who's now *Blessed*, and Mother Adèle who's *Blessed*, and, of course, the Marianist martyrs, most of them from the Spanish Civil War and Fr. Jakob Gapp from the time of the Nazi regime. And so, it was an opportunity for me just to investigate and try to find what I can know more about them.

#### **7:11 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Now, of course, we know more about our Founders because they're profuse writers. They wrote lots of letters about who they were and what they were about and how we came about, the Family of Mary. And so, for our Founders, it was much easier. But, of course, the later saints – the Marianist martyrs and some of the ones who are now *Venerable* and a *Servant of God* – because a lot of the material is in Spanish or another foreign language – and my capacity for language is very poor. It's not something that... has been a skill of mine. So, for me, it's been a little harder. I have to find things that have been in English, which we have some material in English, but still a lot of the stuff that is being written, even today, is still in either Spanish or French. And maybe I put a plea out there to any member of our Family of Mary here in the United States who would be willing to help with calling, contacting NACMS to help translate

some of this material, especially on our saints. It would be a great help to me and a great help to the promotion of the saints. So, that's part of [what] the challenge has been for me.

**8:36 – Gabby Bibeau**

So, in this process of learning, were there any Marianist saints, blessed, venerables, et cetera that you didn't know about, but who you discovered and now you feel a particular affinity for or affection for?

**8:56 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well... that's a good question because I have to think about that and... knowing who I am and try to figure out what is important, especially for people who are marginalized and outcast and to gain a greater awareness of what especially our Founders [had] done with those who people, the people who were marginalized: chimney sweeps, even women still... after the French Revolution and the poor. So, that has helped me to understand the need, even in this world today, the importance of assisting those who feel they don't belong. And I think our Founders helped that. Now, it's a challenge for me because I don't know a lot about our martyrs. A lot of them were educators. A lot of them were working in the schools during the Spanish Civil War before that. And of course, the government there was very anti-Catholic, and anybody who worked for the Catholic Church was targeted very much so. And so, I still have to figure out who they are about in my life and what that means, and it's an ongoing process, I think, for anybody who wants to investigate the saints. It's an ongoing process in trying to understand who [or] what's important for them and how their lives speak to our lives.

**10:33 – Gabby Bibeau**

Who would you say are some of the lesser-known saints that you think people probably don't know about or never heard of?

**10:42 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well, I think some of the saints that are now involved with the beginning processes are, I think, probably... some of our lesser known, the *Venerables* other than Marie Thérèse. You have Faustino, who was a young 16-year-old. And I know certain countries like in Spain or even in Africa, they have what they call Faustino Groups to work with the youth, because he was such a young person. He was very into the Rosary, and I think young people understand the importance of prayer, then they probably [have a] good chance to look at Faustino as a possible avenue towards assisting in prayer.

**11:26 – Gabby Bibeau**

And his Marianist connection was that he went to a Marianist school.

**11:29 – David Betz, SM**

When he was a student, yes, very much so. And he wanted to become a religious. So, they identified him as sort of an aspirant to the religious community. But because of the illness that took him at a young age... but he was considered a holy person. And that's the reason why one of our former superior generals, José Maria Saliverri, was a major promoter of Faustino. But if you look at these other people who are here, this Dominic [Domingo] Lázaro and this Venerable who recently just became Venerable Vicente López de Uralde... Educators, primary educators, and

very influential in the education system in Spain. And so, these are the newer people. There's brother Miguel Quiroga, who was killed down in Colombia. He was supposedly defending some workers... Paramilitary group – but, again, another young man, he was only in his 20s. He was 26 when he was murdered. And then the most recent they're trying to seek in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to open his cause. They're trying to approach the Bishop. His name is Fr. Raymond Halter, a Frenchman who was a longtime missionary in the Western Africa. The most recent word was that they're trying to write to the Bishop of Abidjan to consider opening his cause.

**12:55 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Usually, the causes have to be opened in the places where either they died or where they ministered for a long time. I believe, for example, Fr. Raymond ministered and died in Abidjan because his gravesite is in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. And so, you have to approach the ordinary or the local Bishop of the area. So, for example, [for] Fr. Chaminade, they approached Bordeaux. [For] Mother Adèle, they had approached the Bishop in Agen. And for Miguel Quiroga's concern, we have to approach the Bishop of the Diocese in Colombia.

**13:35 – Gabby Bibeau**

So, now that we're on the topic, could you say more about the process of canonization? So, first you have to approach the local ordinary to introduce the cause?

**13:45 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Mm-hmm, and you have to develop what they call a Positio... which is a position paper, and that position paper has to be investigated. You have to approach people who may have known the individual if the person is more recent, or through various letters or various other documentation that can let you know what this person was about and how he lived his life of holiness. So, that's a lot of work and a lot of effort to go into finding that. And sometimes there's too much. You know, Chaminade had *a lot* of paperwork. Mother Adèle not as much, but still she wrote. And so, you just really have to investigate, and it takes time. And so, the first stage is to gather this information and to approach the local Bishop and say, “This is what we have... Would you be interested in pursuing this?” And if the Bishop says, “Yes, let's move forward,” it's always ongoing information, ongoing gathering of information and documentation for Rome...

**14:50 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

And then, after that first investigation paperwork and if the Bishop says yes, they'll pursue it and it moves towards the next and they send it to Rome to investigate more. And then the first level is *Servant of God*, where they just identify, “Yeah, we believe this person... led a good life, and I think [he or she] could be called *Servant of God*.” And then more investigation, more documents, more witnesses. You know, interviewing witnesses, if there's witnesses still available. And then, they declare the veracity of the virtues, because when you declare the veracity, that means you become *Venerable*. Now those two first steps you really don't need any miracles. It's the next two steps that you need miracles.

**15:43 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

All right, the term beatification: in order to become a *Blessed*, at least one miracle has to be attained. Again, lots of investigation. You have to call in doctors, make sure it wasn't cured through the process of medical science, that this was done “extraordinary.” The only thing that's

changed [is] that if you're a martyr, the martyrs can be declared beatified or *Blessed* without that first [miracle], as long as their life has exemplified that they died for the faith. So... as long as Rome believes that they died for the faith and their life exemplified that, they can move on to beatification. But a normal person, like Fr. Chaminade, who died of older age and natural causes, you have to have at least one miracle. And for Fr. Chaminade, it was, I think, I believe, a miracle in South America. And then, again, with Mother Adèle, they had a single miracle of one of our Marianist Sisters in Italy who was cured of her type of cancer. And then sainthood, canonization is the second miracle.

**17:01 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Part of this whole process is in you're invited to prayer. That's the key. That's one of the keys. The major key is that you invite people to pray to these holy people, men and women, to intercede for us. You know, our great intercessor of who we are as Marianists is Mary... She's had many sightings throughout the history, the ages, and for her intercession, a lot of miracles have taken place... A lot of people have been beneficiaries of who she is. But again, that's the way we have to deal with the saints, these holy people. We have to pray to them individually. Granted, some of these martyrs of our Marianist martyrs have been beatified as a group, but still you have to pray individually to each person to try to get that intercession. And I think part of what I write in these things in inviting people to pray, [is] inviting people to have that faith.

**18:07 – Gabby Bibeau**

So just to clarify, all the Marianist *Blesseds* are either martyrs or Adèle and Chaminade, correct?

**18:16 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Yes. So, you have Fr. Chaminade, Mother Adèle. And then, you have Carlos Eraña, Jesús Hita, Fidel Fuidio, Jakob Gapp, Miguel Leibar, Florencio Arnáiz, Joaquín Ochoa, and Sabino Ayastuy. So, that's ten. We have ten people who are beatified.

**18:37 – Gabby Bibeau**

I mean, this process takes a long time. Chaminade's cause was open, I think in – what, like the 1920s or early 20th century?

**18:48 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Yeah, he died in 1850, [and his] cause didn't probably open until, as you said, in the early 20th century. And here it is, 2000 is when he was finally beatified... Adèle died in 1828, [and her] cause may have been started, again, in the early 20th century or even later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Again, beatified not until... 2018. So, it's only been five years. So, yeah, it's a long process for a number of people. But then, of course, [for some] people it happens quickly. Look at Mother Teresa of Calcutta! Hers happened quickly. [Pope] John XXIII was considered, even though he died in the early 60s... that was awfully quick, between 1963 and when he was sainted. Canonized just recently.

**19:50 – Gabby Bibeau**

Now, are there people in your life that you've encountered – they could be living or dead – that you've thought, “Wow, that person is a saint!”

**20:01 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Well, you know, if you look at a lot of the people in our lives that we look at today... [they] will never be – not canonized or never be blessed, but the role models in our life. And I think my mother was very key. My mother was unconditional in her love. And I think that's very important, a person who was willing to go beyond herself. She was a nurse, and so she was in a caring profession, and she went beyond what was expected of her to be that unconditional person. If I look at other people, I look at people like Mike Lisbeth, who was my spiritual director for seven years when I was a temporary professed. Wonderful, wonderful gentleman, very kind and compassionate. Willing to be accepting of who I was in my journey, and that's somebody you have to look upon as a saintly person.

**21:01 – Gabby Bibeau**

Speaking of Mike Lisbeth, who was a Marianist priest that died a handful of years ago here in Dayton, do you know are there any members of the Marianist family that might have their cause introduced? Like, [is] there anybody who's part of the Marianist Family, Brothers, Sisters, lay people that are in the conversation that they're cause might be introduced from the United States.

**21:29 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

That's interesting because I posed that question, too, in *Marianist Moments* several years ago. I said I invited people, but for some reason, there was not many responses. I said, "Who could you identify in the United States?" Because at this present time, most of the saints we have are European or South American – one South American, but the rest are European. So... who could be identified as that possibility to enter this process knowing the arduous task it is? ... I look at people like Joseph Stefanelli. I look at people like Steve Tutas. I look at Audrey Buttner. I look at people who engaged in their ministry and their mission very much so, and who could be possible people who would – Somebody would say somebody like Leo Murray, who is one of our Brothers who lived in Ireland for a number of years and died in Ireland, who was very in-tune to the needs of the people there. And also, I think he was involved with Pax Christi as well. So, somebody like Leo Murray, those type of people really come to my mind.

**22:58 – Gabby Bibeau**

Another name I've heard is Bro. John Soehnel, who lived on this property [Mount Saint John, Dayton, OH] a long time ago. And I think he was blind, right, and he lived in the Novitiate?

**23:06 – Bro. David Betz, SM**

Yes, he was blind for – I don't know if he was blind from birth, but he was blind... Yes, so I lived with him during my novitiate, and so he was there... He had a chicken coop on the property here, and so he was very involved in a lot of stuff here on the property during his life.

**23:28 – Gabby Bibeau**

Well, thank you so much for talking to us, and I think our listeners will really enjoy the things you've shared and learn so much from you. So, thank you. Thank you all so much for listening to this episode of Sharing Our Marianist Stories. Thank you for continuing to support this podcast. It will continue into the future even though Patti won't be here. We will continue to be producing this podcast, and we appreciate you listening and for telling your friends and community members about it. If you would like to know more about the Marianist saints, you can go to the

NACMS website at [www.nacms.org](http://www.nacms.org). That's [nacms.org](http://nacms.org). We have books about some of the saints. We have some online free resources about the saints. There's plenty to learn. You can also sign up for the *Family Online* newsletter. That's a monthly newsletter that comes out that Bro. David mentions. He writes a *Marianist Moment* each month for that that talks about the Marianist saints. So, you can sign up for that if you go to [www.marianist.com](http://www.marianist.com). That should be on the front page. You can put in your e-mail and you can learn every month something new about the saints. So, thank you all again for listening. We hope you have a happy spring.