

Sharing Our Marianist Stories, Episode 5 Transcript
Building a Hearth for the World (with Abby Lisjak and Elizabeth Abrams)

0:00 - Elizabeth Abrams

Being community does not mean that we as a Hearth Community sit around and talk about, “Darn, the world's in such a bad place!” Being community means we as a Hearth Community, we sit and we talk, and then we go, and we find more communities.

0:13 - Abby Lisjak

As part of our commitment, we wanted to be able to kind of create a hearth in other places by combining and interacting with other Lay Marianist Communities where we're able, I think, to really form that and to really acknowledge and recognize that we are all part of one family.

0:39 - Patti Gehred

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

0:43 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

And I'm Sister Gabby Bibeau.

0:45 - Patti Gehred

Today, we're going to hear Abby Lisjak, a current UD [University of Dayton] student graduating at the end of this year, and Elizabeth Abrams, a UD alum, who are members of the Hearth Marianist Lay Community.

0:58 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

Abby and Elizabeth were interviewed this past summer at the Marianist Lay Assembly [2017], and they were interviewed by Juliet Fromholt from WYSO [Dayton Radio Station]. So, you'll hear Juliet chime in to ask some questions at a couple points during the interview. A big theme of the assembly was about telling our stories. And you'll hear Abby and Elizabeth reflect a lot on what stories mean to them and what stories mean to their own Hearth Community.

1:28 - Patti Gehred

I think their name, *Hearth*, invites storytelling. I like hearing the names that all these young adult groups that are created through a Lay Marianist program through UD come up with. So, they'll continue to talk about how they grow as a community, some of the things they are doing as a community, and also how they're dealing with being at distance. I think you'll be excited to hear they use our Adèle [de Batz de Trenquelléon, aka Mother Marie of the Conception] as a mentor.

1:55 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

They will give some ideas of some of the things that they've been doing as a community that's helped them stay in touch. And that, as Patti said, is where Adèle comes in, sort of as a model. And they also talk about how other communities have really helped mentor them in navigating the transition. So, many of you listening may find some interesting insights for your own communities or new ideas, and that's what we hope for you.

2:33 - Abby Lisjak

I'm Abby Lisjak. I'm a student at the University of Dayton and from Dayton, Ohio.

2:39 - Elizabeth Abrams

My name is Elizabeth Abrams. I just graduated from the University of Dayton, and we are both members of the newly formed Hearth Community that [is] almost a year old. So, we started at the University of Dayton. So, we formed through the UD Formation Program with Mike Sievers and Bro. Mitch Schweickart. We were juniors and seniors. People came to know the Marianists in different ways. I hadn't heard the word *Marianist* before I got to school. Abby was born into it. She can tell you more about that. But it was neat to develop these relationships and friendships, and then also grow in formation and learning about the charism over a semester.

3:19 - Elizabeth Abrams

And then, we continued meeting every week for the following semester and started to get into conversations about what we were going to look like after three of us graduated and five of us were still at school. But being here at the Lay Assembly for the first time as younger Lay Marianists is very hopeful and energizing, to see that this isn't just at UD, and it's so much bigger than what I think we knew - many of the people in our community - knew originally. And to be able to kind of like hold these stories that we're hearing, and then allow them to grow both in and with and through our community is a gift.

3:57 - Abby Lisjak

Yeah, as Elizabeth said, I've been part of the Marianists since I was born. But have really through this formation process, have really understood more about what exactly that means and have been able to take a lot more ownership of that as a Lay Marianist. So, through that whole process, we were able to learn as a community a lot more about what it meant to be Marianist. And then, as we ended that formation program, and especially have been going into the summer with figuring out what to do, the Ahava Community - which was another UD-formed community - offered their guidance to us as we were trying to determine where to go. And they were really able to provide us with support and an understanding of the challenges that can come from starting, and were really beneficial in kind of giving us some guidance on what exactly a community can look like outside of the formation process and how to do that, especially when we weren't all in the same place.

4:56 - Elizabeth Abrams

The name of our community is *Hearth*, and we chose the name because stories are so important. We're all introverts. We learned that very quickly, and so listening is important, and the thing that we think we do well. So, there's this idea that we're all around this hearth and we invite people to come in, which is an active process. And then, we listen to these "stories," for lack of a better word, with compassion. "Tell me what you feel so I can feel it, too." But then that has to translate to action. And I think for me at this conference, that's been the biggest lesson is how are we going to make that translate into action.

5:32 - Abby Lisjak

And I think with that, as well as part of our commitment, we wanted to be able to kind of create a hearth in other places. And by combining and interacting with other Lay Marianist Communities, we're able, I think, to really form that and to really acknowledge and recognize that we are all

part of one family. And that's something I think I've noticed even more being here and how broad and how big this family is in the depth and breadth of experience and wisdom that people have who have been here this weekend and how much you can learn from each interaction in each story that you hear.

6:12 - Elizabeth Abrams

And not only our stories, but also building on the Founders stories has been another theme. I'm thinking about *Head, Heart and Hands* and we certainly have all of those things in different people, in different places in our community. And I see that all across the board in the Marianist Family and different times call for, I think, different emphases of those. So right now, one of the things we're doing sort of inspired by Adèle, but we're writing letters to the community every two weeks, roughly every person will write on Google - we use Google Docs and it's available to everyone. You just write a letter, "Dear Hearth, this is how my life is going right now. This was a cool thing that happened yesterday. This is. . . Please pray for my family." But just being really inspired by the intentionality of a letter has been a way that we're kind of growing in community. Through the vision of Adèle we certainly have - It's very justice oriented as Marianists are in general. So taking after Marie Thérèse in that way. And trying to think longitudinally like Chaminade, but not be too consumed by the future that we forget to be present.

7:19 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

In the second-half of the interview you will hear Juliet chime in to ask both of them what their relationship with Mary is, and how that strengthens their Marianist commitment?

7:31 - Patti Gehred

They'll also talk about how they see community as a positive force in the local area, as well as a necessity with the growing Marianist family.

7:47 - Juliet Fromholt

You mentioned being in the present and yet looking forward. How does Mary help both of you accomplish that, especially as young people as you're wrapping up your college careers and going forth into the world? How do you use Mary as your guide through that?

8:06 - Elizabeth Abrams

I was thinking about Mary at the foot of the cross, actually, earlier. At that moment she had to be - she was called to be present, right? Her son is dying before her. But Saint John was with her and her son called her to look outwards. And then her son died, and now her son is handed to her. So, she's in that moment. And then if you think about the image of Michelangelo's *Pietà* in the Vatican, she's like holding her son out for us. Mary's looking forward with this complete surrender. Here is death. Here is - but here is victory and I'm going to hand that to you to take into your life. And at a point, especially in our lives when we're 21 [or] 22 years old - everything is uncertain and to be handed this like, "Yes, it's going to be hard but it's victory in the end." And look out - look at Saint John. Look at the people who are with you. Look to the cross and then go out into the world and handle life. It's definitely a gift, and something that brings me comfort in when I'm thinking about moving to Baltimore in a month when I'm thinking about different things that are so uncertain or scary and the future of our community or the future of the Family or the future of whether I'm going to get a job, that kind of thing is very comforting to look to Mary in that such a difficult position, yet she was still willing to give and to trust and to love.

9:27 - Abby Lisjak

I was actually thinking also of Mary at the foot of the cross, but someone earlier today was talking about how that idea of it was her presence there and that she was there and that's that was the important thing. And I think that idea of being present and really being aware of the surroundings and of where you are and what's going on and kind of taking it in and seeing what it is and then moving from there forward and then taking action, whether that's noticing the lack of wine at the wedding at Cana and taking that first step of just being present and looking and being aware and then trying to convert that into action, even if it's small, kind of trying to build off of that and build off of what others are doing as well.

10:12 - Juliet Fromholt

You're both younger members of the movement, and I've been asking people over this weekend where they would like to see the Marianist movement go in light of our world today. How can the movement move forward to meet the needs of our world? And the two of you are some of the people that will be doing that work. What are the needs that you're seeing that you two and your community of Marianist - your Hearth Community - can begin to meet?

10:44 - Abby Lisjak

For me, being from the city of Dayton and going to school in Dayton, I've really gotten to know what the city is and a lot of what the city has. And one thing that has been a challenge has been the lack of food access, and of healthy food. And so, I think for me seeing that issue and talking about it is really important.

11:09 - Elizabeth Abrams

Community - it feels like the best way to address what I see as the biggest need in our world right now. And being community, does not mean that we as a Hearth Community sit around and talk about, "Darn the world's in such a bad place!" or "Darn look at those people over there that are just struggling." Being community - means we as a Hearth Community we sit, we talk, and then we go, and we find more communities and build more communities. And even outside of us I think if someone doesn't feel welcome in a church, the way to make them feel welcome is through community. If someone feels political polarization - the way to address that is in community. If everyone is- we're very into screens and the way to escape that is community. But also see that screens can be used for good sometimes. And I think that community is something the Marianists do so well. And that's definitely a gift that we have that we can bring to the world.

12:10 - Juliet Fromholt

What would you want your fellow Marianists listening to this to know about your story or your journey? What would you want them to take away from this conversation?

12:22 - Abby Lisjak

One of the things I think that we get to take away is just the fact that our communities are all interconnected, and that support and guidance we can get from the communities who have been around longer or even ones that haven't been around as long and just that, the different ideas and different understandings and different perspectives that you can get, and that when you bring them all together, the new view you have and the broader view you have in the - you know, I

think a clearer picture of what it means to be Marianist and to be a part of this family. And I think that's one of the most important things and I think one of the biggest takeaways I've had.

13:04 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

Thank you for listening to *Sharing our Marianists Stories*, a podcast through the North American Center for Marianist Studies.

13:09 - Patti Gehred

Abby and Elizabeth talked about how they were inspired by Mother Adèle in her letter writing campaign. If you're interested in reading Adèle's letters, go to www.nacms.org and click on our bookstore.

13:24 - Gabby Bibeau, FMI

And if you enjoyed this podcast, please tell your friends and invite them to subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher or listen to it from our website.