

## **Samadhi Metta Bexar: How Am I Called to Be Marianist?**

*[Editor's note: Samadhi, from San Antonio, Texas, wrote her essay as part of the inaugural session of Marianists Write Now!, a NACMS-sponsored writing program held virtually from Friday, November 13 to Saturday, November 14, 2020. Each participant in this session of Marianists Write Now! wrote a personal reflection on the following question: "How am I called to be Marianist?"]*

Education is how I chose to play out a vocation of helping, encouraging learning without fully understanding why. I first met the Marianists at St. Mary's University in San Antonio as a 16-year-old freshman with a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity, but not a lot of mental discipline. The presence of many Marianist religious meant I could both ask and be asked questions that sparked an even stronger current of inquiry in me that has always felt essential to who I am and what I do. From formative classes with Brother Terry O'Connor, SM, to present-day coffee with Father Tim Eden, SM, in our masked time, the Marianists have a hold on me.

Four essential aspects of the Marianist charism that I feel have directed my choices in life are openness, adaptability, inquiry, and orientation to the future. Reflecting upon the above question (How am I called to be Marianist?), I find that the essential element in the charism, for me, is the importance of educating the whole person in a very literal way. Chaminade's early work with the Sodality, rather than his development of a distinct religious order, tells me he understood that a holistic treatment for France's spiritual ills might best be served from the ground up—both Adèle and Marie Thérèse understood that in a profound way.

These four aspects (openness, adaptability, inquiry, and orientation) are also important to learning and development in people. In my role now as assistant director of the McNair Scholars Program, I can take my first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented experience of successfully navigating graduate school and higher education and serve my students with a passion that can also be frustrating. But as Jessica Uhlig mentioned in a Zoom breakout room for Marianists Write Now!, the most frustrating things are the ones we're most passionate about in life. The frustrations are part of how I am called to be Marianist.

Despite my spiritual, theological, and personal issues with Roman Catholicism, I find the Marianist charism compelling and almost irresistible in how it asks us to look to the future, to ask and answer and engage and struggle with open hearts and minds. There have been times in history where churches haven't been encouraging of inquiry and engagement, far less working with laity as equals. The powerful role of the laity from the beginning of the Marianist Family, the focus on education and development of the person for and in times of great change, and the openness to what the world has to offer for the development of the individual are irresistible to me. Despite fatigue, burnout, and educational chaos in the US, this means that I do choose to struggle with my doubts, concerns, and frustrations, with my eye on the future of this world and the one to come.