

Blessed Are We: How Our Missionary Zeal Can Build the Marian Church by Margaret M. Lisjak

[*Editor's Note:* Margy's article stems from her involvement in Marianist Studies Program 2.0, a year-long assisted inquiry into the topic of the Mother of Jesus Is Here: Building Today's Marian Church, which was conducted by NACMS in 2018-19.]

Introduction

Mary calls us to action with her to be missionary disciples in bringing Jesus into the world. Exploring how Mary lived in her own time, from her "Yes" to God's call through and beyond her presence at the foot of the cross, can lead us to discover how her life is a model for us, for our founders and forebears, and for our Church today.

Why is this important for me to explore, for us to explore? Our Church today is at a crossroads. With recent headlines of abuse, scandal, and disenfranchisement, many of us are disappointed and at a loss of how to reconcile these challenges with our deep love of God and the practice of our faith in the Catholic tradition.

As Marianists, we are uniquely positioned to share our gift of Mary to transform ourselves and our Church today. Blessed Chaminade's vision to rebuild the Church of France through Mary's lived experience of birthing, nurturing, and following Jesus provides us an ideal path to follow today.

A Marian Church calls us to walk beside our neighbors. To rebuild our Church today, we must step outside the walls of the buildings in which we worship to integrate what we believe with how we live. Together in community, our interactions and the relationships we build take on a holiness in the presence of God. Mary formed Jesus to be fully human, walking with him throughout his entire life. As the Mother of our Church, she walks with us through all stages of our lives. She shows us the joys and challenges that come when we say "yes" and place our deep trust in God. This trust creates in us a freedom that fills our hearts with excitement but allows room for questioning and challenges us to live in solidarity with others. A Marian Church is a community that is deeply relational, highly intentional, and keenly present to the individual person in their time and their place.

Blessed Chaminade speaks of "missionary zeal" as essential for building this Marian Church. Merriam Webster defines missionary zeal as "great enthusiasm" for taking on one's specific project. It defines mission "as a specific task or purpose with which a person or a group is charged to undertake, especially a religious mission."¹ As a member of the Marianist Family, we are called to take on with great enthusiasm Mary's mission of nurturing the good work, the vital work, of bringing Jesus into our world today. This vital work must meet our neighbors where they are by listening deeply and openly, walking with and beside, and loving with a heart opened wide.

Chaminade found the example of the first apostles to be particularly important for building the Church. The first apostles were a community with a mission to teach others what they were taught by Jesus and Mary—to love one another as brothers and sisters with one heart and one soul.² Chaminade believed the Sodality provided the model to build these communities. His

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/missionary%20zeal>

² Jean Baptiste Armbruster, SM, *William Joseph Chaminade: Marian Writings*, vol. 2 (Dayton, OH: Marianist Press, 1980), 93.

vision of the Sodalties were small Christian communities, under the direction of Mary, dedicated to re-Christianizing France.³

Blessed Chaminade called the young men and women of his time, and us today, to be “the auxiliaries and instruments of the Blessed Virgin in the great work of moral reform, of support and spread of the faith, and by that fact, of the sanctification of our neighbor. She entrusts us with the ingenuity and inventiveness of her almost boundless charity.”⁴

Mary in Her Own Time

Mary teaches us, by her lived experiences, a way that can move us forward in sharing her mission to bring Jesus alive in our world. Mary formed Jesus and Jesus formed Mary, giving her the unique experience of knowing our God and the Holy Spirit through the eyes of her son.

William Behringer, SM, in *Mary and the Beatitudes* shares his understanding of how Mary lived her life in the way Jesus calls us to live today . . . by living the Beatitudes. He challenges each of us to live the Beatitudes. This is not an easy task, but Mary’s “yes” gives us an ordinary human life to model. Her “yes” gives us the way to mold ourselves and grow our Church into one that is transformational and holy.

There are several key moments in Mary’s life that serve as examples for us—the Visitation, the Annunciation, the Purification of Jesus, the Wedding Feast at Cana, and Calvary. Each event highlights Mary’s call, acceptance, and wholehearted “yes” to God’s call. These stories not only show us Mary’s response and deep trust in God’s promise but also give us the way to live, and they demonstrate how her deep love and trust led her on her journey as the mother of Jesus and the mother of our Church.

Bertrand A. Buby, SM, in *Scripture and the Marian Writings of Father William Joseph Chaminade*, recounts Blessed Chaminade’s reflections of Mary from the Gospel of Luke. He speaks of Mary reaching out to those in need, as at the Visitation,⁵ her work as Mother of the Savior with a desire to work for the salvation of all,⁶ and how she exemplifies what it means to follow Jesus.⁷ In each of these reflections, Chaminade calls us to consider Mary’s “yes” that demonstrated how she chose to walk with and beside her neighbor, to listen deeply, and to call each of us to “do whatever he tells you.”

Mary as Model

If we desire to become Christ-like,
we have in Mary a fully human model for doing so.

³ Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Chaminade, Pragmatist with a Vision* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 2000), 9.

⁴ William Joseph Chaminade, *Letters*, no. 1163 to Preachers of Retreats, Aug. 24, 1839; vol. 5, p. 56.

⁵ Jean Baptiste Armbruster, SM, *William Joseph Chaminade: Marian Writings*, vol. 1 (Dayton, OH: Marianist Press, 1980), 413-15.

⁶ Armbruster, *Marian Writings*, vol. 1, 473-75, 481.

⁷ Bertrand A. Buby, SM, *Scripture and the Marian Writings of Father William Joseph Chaminade* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 2000), 78-91.

As Marianists, we are called to go out with others to bring Jesus to the world. Mary shows us how. Mary teaches us, through her lived experiences, a way that can move us forward in our mission to bring Jesus alive in ourselves and in the world:

- Mary said “yes”—a deceptively simple response profoundly spoken at the Annunciation
- Mary met people where they were
- Mary walked *together* with the stranger, the stricken, the outcast—in the stable at the birth of Jesus, and during the flight with Joseph to Egypt
- Mary exuded a deep and confident trust in God—at the Annunciation, Cana, and the Foot of the Cross
- Mary pondered the words of God in her heart—at the Presentation, and in finding Jesus at the temple
- Mary was part of the first community with the apostles in the upper room at Pentecost, providing the inspiration the apostles needed to go out themselves to bring Jesus to the world
- Mary held an integral part in forming Jesus in his mission.⁸

“I went about seeking how to get her for myself.
For she knows and understands all things,
and she will guide me wisely in my actions
and guard me with her glory. (Song 8:18, 9:11)

Reflection Following 10 minutes of quiet reflection, select one of the following questions to discuss with your table group.

1. Consider the Beatitudes on the sheet provided to you. Identify one Beatitude that speaks to your heart. Consider how Mary lived that in her life and how you might live that statement in your own life.
2. Does this definition of *missionary zeal* resonate with you?

As a member of the Marianist Family, we are called to take on with great enthusiasm Mary’s mission of nurturing the good work, the vital work, of bringing Jesus into our world today. This vital work must meet our neighbors where they are by listening deeply and openly, walking with and beside, and loving with a heart opened wide.

3. How does Mary model missionary zeal for our Marianist Family?

⁸ William Behringer, SM, *Mary and the Beatitudes* (NY: Alba House, 1964), 32.

4. What is an action you can take today to demonstrate your understanding of *missionary zeal*?

Mary as a Model for Our Forebears

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, Blessed Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon, and Venerable Marie Thérèse de Lamourous responded “yes” to bring about change in a world filled with turmoil and pain. They each found in Mary the wisdom of listening to and living deeply God’s call to re-Christianize France following the Revolution. Mary provided the path for them to follow.

William Joseph Chaminade

“The spirit of faith will become a spirit of confidence in God,
a spirit of zeal, a spirit of courage and generosity.”
Letter, February 26, 1824

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade was a man of faith. Time and again, Blessed Chaminade’s efforts were thwarted by forces over which he had no control. Each time, he rebounded and started again, knowing deep in his heart that through Mary his efforts would be blessed and his faith in Jesus Christ strengthened.

Exiled to Saragossa, Chaminade discerned and planned what was to become his life’s work: to assist the Mother of Jesus in her continuing role of bringing forth her son into our world. His meditations on the relationship between Jesus and Mary led him to understand how she shared in her son’s life and work and how all Christians, her children in Christ, were to share in her work.⁹ This was not an easy task for Chaminade. However, he knew when he returned to France that it would be essential to recreate communities of believers, what became the Bordeaux Sodality, who could support one another in living their Christian faith. He initially sought out the young men and women of the city, but his work quickly expanded to include older and married men and women, priests, and former members of religious orders.¹⁰

Chaminade created the Sodality to be apostolic in its orientation. With Mary’s relationship to Jesus as a guide and with sharing in her apostolic mission under her patronage, Chaminade identified a wide range of activities aimed at re-Christianizing the social structures of his time. Unlike previous sodalities, the Bordeaux Sodality was open to all Christians. Chaminade’s vision was to present the imposing spectacle of a nation of saints, a People of God, an authentic Christian community. For this structure to work, he created “union without confusion,” a highly developed system of interdependence and cooperation under his leadership, where all were equal members of the Sodality.¹¹ Chaminade was a man who combined remarkable vision with intense

⁹ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 6.

¹⁰ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 9.

¹¹ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 10-11.

practicality and an insistence to “do whatever he tells you,” adapted to the needs of the contemporary world.

Chaminade was not alone in his quest to re-Christianize France following the Revolution. Marie Thérèse de Lamourous and Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon were essential to the growth and vitality of the Bordeaux Sodality and the Family of Mary.

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon

“What we must constantly strive to instill into each other is the love of God.”

—Adèle, Letter no. 1 to Agathe Diché

Feb. 2, 1805

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon’s deep love for Jesus was evident throughout her life, taking her on a journey that eventually led to her partnership with Chaminade in the growth of the Marianist Family. Adèle learned very early from her mother what it meant to be a Christian—caring for the poor and sick, visiting them in their homes, sharing food and clothing, and selling off personal possessions, such as jewelry. She often accompanied her mother on errands of mercy.¹²

As a young woman of deep faith during and following the French Revolution, she felt called to religious life. Though the Revolution intervened and led her in other ways, her dedication to living a deeply spiritual life never waned. At her insistence, a rule of life was developed for her by her tutor and spiritual guide, Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Ducourneau, a former religious. Together with her closest friend, Jeanne Diché, Adèle would continue to live and deepen her faith. With the upheaval and uncertainty that followed the French Revolution, Ducourneau was concerned that Adèle and Jeanne would encounter difficult challenges that might impact their spiritual growth. Life was difficult with diseases and suffering that often could not be relieved. Having lived and grown up during this time, the potential for death was always on their minds. As a path to lessen their struggles, he suggested they join him in a community of prayer and mutual spiritual support.

Together with four of Jeanne’s sisters and two women from Ducourneau’s village, they created what became known as the Association. “Their stated purpose in joining together, in addition to general mutual support and communion of prayer, is to prepare for a good death.”¹³ Members of Adèle’s Association worked at their own spiritual progress under the leadership of spiritual mentors, while also devoting themselves to a wide range of corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

Blessed Adèle met Father Chaminade as a result of her mother’s meeting with Jean Baptiste Lafon, a leader within the Bordeaux Sodality and an associate of Father Chaminade. Realizing the similarities between Adèle’s Association and the Sodality, Lafon recommended that Adèle correspond with Chaminade.

Chaminade began corresponding with Adèle in 1808 and quickly recognized how closely aligned Adèle’s Association was with his mission to bring Jesus into the world through Mary’s lived relationship with Jesus.

Imagine the joy Chaminade felt in the possibility to expand his dream beyond Bordeaux with the addition of the Association! With ideals and practices that closely resembled those of the

¹² Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Adèle, Aristocrat for the Poor*, (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 1999), 4.

¹³ Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Adele* (Dayton, OH: Marianist Resources Commission, 1989), 70-71.

Sodality at the Madeleine, Chaminade realized the potential for great work to be done by reaching out in ways beyond the capacity of the urban-based Sodality. As Adèle learned more about Chaminade's vision, she, too, was enlivened and challenged to share in Mary's mission.¹⁴

While her lifelong call to religious life with the Carmelites never materialized, Adèle realized her vocation could be lived through a life dedicated to Mary. On May 25, 1816, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary (Marianist Sisters) was founded in Agen. Soon afterward, some women from the Bordeaux Sodality would join Adèle as her sisters.

Chaminade and Adèle were kindred spirits, despite their age difference (Chaminade was 47, Adèle was 19), life backgrounds (Chaminade was a member of the merchant class, Adèle was of the aristocracy), and education (Chaminade was an ordained teacher, Adèle was homeschooled by her mother). However, both centered their lives on God and dedicated their efforts to the reconstruction of the Christian faith following the Revolution. The contact with Chaminade took Adèle's Association down a path that changed both Adèle's and Chaminade's visions. While different, both the Association and the Sodality were active in supporting personal spiritual growth through education, religious instruction, and extensive works of mercy.¹⁵

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous

“I am in the House of Mercy, and my heart is a place of prayer.”
Rumi

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous was already well into the work of Mary when she first met Father Chaminade. As Joseph Stefanelli, SM, describes in his writings, when priests were forced from their practice of the faith during the Revolution, Marie Thérèse became the “pastor-shepherd”¹⁶ of the faithful Catholic community in Pian. She gathered people for Sunday worship, held catechism classes, prepared individuals for the sacraments, gave counsel, and secured the services of “underground” priests.¹⁷ It was during this time that she met Father Chaminade (1795-96). After her spiritual mentor, Father Simon Pannetier, was executed, she asked Father Chaminade to take on this role for her. Her own deep desire to keep the faith alive in Bordeaux and among her community coincided well with Father Chaminade's mission.

Marie Thérèse's impact on the Marianist Family was noteworthy and substantial.¹⁸ Beyond her work as “pastor-shepherd” during the Revolution, Marie Thérèse actively supported, strengthened, challenged, and called laypersons to join the work of re-Christianizing France.

On March 25, 1801, the Young Women's group of the Bordeaux Sodality was established. Marie Thérèse was the first to list her name on the registry of the Young Women's section. She provided leadership and assisted Chaminade as he continued to expand his Sodality.¹⁹ She was Chaminade's chief partner in establishing the two feminine branches of the Sodality (Young Women's section and Ladies of the Retreat section). At the same time, he was her associate in

¹⁴ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 12-13.

¹⁵ Stefanelli, *Adèle, Aristocrat*, 11-12.

¹⁶ As a result of priests being forced to take an oath to the civil authorities, not Rome, Marie Thérèse took on the role of minister and collaborator to ensure the faithful continued their religious and spiritual growth.

¹⁷ Joseph Stefanelli, SM, *Marie Thérèse de Lamourous, Firm of Hand, Loving of Heart* (Dayton, OH: NACMS), 6.

¹⁸ Stefanelli, *Marie Thérèse, Firm of Hand*, 24.

¹⁹ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 9.

her new venture of directing the Miséricorde (House of Mercy).²⁰ The Miséricorde was a home for repentant prostitutes, initially begun by Marie Thérèse's friends. The home provided the women with an education, prepared them for employment once they left the home, and helped them live a Christian life.

Later in 1801, the Ladies of the Retreat group was formed from members of the Bordeaux Sodality. This group, organized by the women of the Sodality, took an interest in the younger women and provided them with counsel and a good example. Father Stefanelli, in *Marie Thérèse, Firm of Hand, Loving of Heart*, notes the nucleus of this group was, according to Father Joseph Simler, SM, the Ladies Sponsoring Committee of the Miséricorde. Collaborators for the work of the Miséricorde were drawn from members of the Sodality; the Sodality became the spiritual center for many of the directresses of the Miséricorde, and a number of the Miséricorde graduates joined the Sodality.²¹

Marie Thérèse's impact on the work of the Miséricorde and the women who lived and worked there was substantial. She lived and modeled Mary's example of raising and nurturing Jesus into the world through this work. In addition to her administrative tasks, she lived life as a servant-leader.

- Marie Thérèse would visit the workrooms and infirmary, speaking personally to those who needed it most, giving spiritual guidance, and resolving conflicts when necessary.
- She developed deep relationships with the women of the Miséricorde, meeting them where they were in life and walking with them on their journey.
- Marie Thérèse had a deep and abiding love for each of her *filles*, cherishing them for who they were.
- She had a strong, unwavering trust in God.
- Marie Thérèse responded with her "yes" to her call from God that was at the same time accepting, challenging, and demanding.²²

The relationship and interactions between these two organizations allowed both the Sodality and the work of the Miséricorde to grow and expand to meet the increasing demands of the times. The sodalists were disciples in their times, walking together with their neighbors, listening deeply to their needs, and strengthening their own faith as they helped to strengthen the faith of others.

Chaminade requested that Marie Thérèse visit Agen and help with the initial organization of what would become the Marianist Sisters. As was evident by her work with the Sodality and the Miséricorde, Marie Thérèse had a gift for such tasks.²³ Her assessment of Adèle's leadership and spiritual gifts confirmed Adèle's ability to fill the role as the first director of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary (FMI) and led Chaminade to name Adèle as superior.

²⁰ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 12.

²¹ Stefanelli, *Marie Thérèse, Firm of Hand*, 11.

²² Stefanelli, *Marie Thérèse, Firm of Hand*, 17.

²³ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 16.

Chaminade, Adèle, and Marie Thérèse each felt a deep concern for the needs of the people, and their interdependent collaboration led to the formation and growth of the Marianist Family. Mary's model of living, nurturing, and forming Jesus provided the path.

"True missionaries should not count on themselves, their talents, or their industry; but they should put all their confidence in the grace of their mission and the protection of the Blessed Virgin, devoting themselves to that work for which she was raised to the divine Maternity."²⁴

Reflection Following 10 minutes of quiet reflection, select one of the following questions to discuss with your table group.

1. Identify 1-2 actions of Chaminade, Adèle, or Marie Thérèse that you believe helped them as they sought to rebuild the Church of France.
2. How do Chaminade, Adèle, or Marie Thérèse model missionary zeal for our Marianist Family?

Missionary zeal: As a member of the Marianist Family, we are called to take on with great enthusiasm Mary's mission of nurturing the good work, the vital work, of bringing Jesus into our world today. This vital work must meet our neighbors where they are by listening deeply and openly, walking with and beside, and loving with a heart opened wide.

3. What is one take away from Chaminade's, Adèle's, or Marie Thérèse's actions that you could incorporate into your own?

Mary as a Model for Our Church Today

"Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."

Lk 11:28

We are blessed to have Mary as our model and our Marianist Founders' faith and wisdom to follow her lived model to bring Jesus into our world. We are blessed to have the Marianist Family as partners on this journey. We are blessed to hear the word of God and observe it—beyond the words we read and beyond the walls in which we worship.

Mary taught us, by her lived experiences, a way that can move us forward in our mission to bring Jesus alive in our world:

- Mary met people where they were—we are compelled to meet our neighbors where they are, reaching out and drawing in.
- Mary walked together with the stranger, the stricken, the outcast, in the stable at the birth of Jesus, and the flight with Joseph to Egypt—we are called to welcome and walk

²⁴ Chaminade, *Letters*, no. 1163, Preachers of Retreats.

together with the immigrant, the poor, the marginalized in our neighborhoods, our cities, our nation, to discover the beauty in others.

- Mary exuded a deep and confident trust in God, at the Annunciation, Cana, and the Foot of the Cross—we are challenged to follow her example and exclaim, “Yes, God!”, knowing that God is with us always, during the most difficult times and the times of greatest joy.
- Mary pondered the words of God in her heart, at the Presentation, and in finding Jesus at the temple—we must listen deeply to the words of our neighbors and together find Jesus in our communities.
- Mary was part of the first community with the apostles in the upper room at Pentecost—we are best formed when we can live in community, working in the presence of others to actively build our Church.
- Mary held an integral part in forming Jesus in his mission—our belief in the discipleship of equals demands that we are all part of the mission, regardless of our differences and because of our unique gifts.

So, this leads us to the question of “how can our own missionary zeal be developed and strengthened to guide us to be an influence for building a Marian Church today?”

As a member of the Marianist Family, missionary zeal is a call for us to take on the work of Mary in nurturing the good work, the vital work, of bringing Jesus into our world today. This vital work must meet our neighbors where they are, listen deeply and openly, walk with and beside, and love with a heart opened wide. This essential work takes us into the hearts of our neighbors, with all their pain, sorrow, and joy, and demands that we enter with love and care.

Our world and the issues we face today can be overwhelming, frightening, hurtful, and bewildering, but it is essential for each person to do something now. It is essential that we “do whatever he tells you.” Marianists are uniquely formed, and we must together discern what Jesus is asking of us now. “Searching for the indications of Providence, seeking to understand the signs of our times, wrestling with the ambiguities and confusions in society and within the Church, like Chaminade, we seek only to spread the Good News to a bewildered and hungry world—like Mary, to make Christ more fully present among us.”²⁵

A few examples of initiatives in the Dayton area undertaken by the Marianist Family include:

- *Mission of Mary Cooperative*: A catalyst and partner for sustainable urban development in Dayton, Ohio, born out of a community of Lay Marianists living and serving in the Twin Towers neighborhood.
- *Marianist PULSE* (Partners in Urban Leadership, Service, and Education): A post-graduate, servant leadership, and social justice initiative sponsored by the Marianists as a means of sharing the Marianist charism through energetic women and men who want to make a positive impact on an urban community.

²⁵ Stefanelli, *Chaminade, Pragmatist*, 26.

- *Dakota Center*: Providing a safe community atmosphere engaging Dayton neighborhoods and people of all ages in programs that educate the whole person. The center is currently in its sixth decade of service tracing back to the vision that the Center’s founders, Philip C. Hoelle, SM, and William Hoben, had of building a community where there is education for the whole person: mind, body, and spirit.

[Others can add examples of works that highlight initiatives in different areas that meet the needs of their community.]

“It’s good to be together in this place, at such a moment.”²⁶ Kelly Johnson, Father William J. Ferree, SM, Chair of Social Justice at the University of Dayton, reminds us that at our most difficult times, our God is with us. Our God calls us to consider the questions of who we are and how we can continue to be Church when our Church disappoints. These are questions that we should not and cannot answer alone. Blessed Chaminade, Blessed Adèle, and Venerable Marie Thérèse showed us a way that draws upon the strengths of others, during times of overwhelming sorrow and pain, times of celebration and joy, and times filled with the ordinariness of life. Together, in community and with a deep trust in our God, we must begin. We must go beyond our walls to seek out those who are different, to learn their stories and truths, and to find a common understanding that binds us all together as children of God.

We must have the zeal to build the Church as Mary did in her day.

A Marian Church

- continues today the mystery of the Incarnation that began when God took human form in the virgin Mary.
- calls us to bring to life the divine love of God in our hearts by offering forgiveness, hope, and meekness to others as Mary taught us.
- allows us to make Christ’s goodness become our own as we bear one another’s burdens.²⁷
- brings us together in community to live as Jesus did, as Mary did with the disciples in the upper room, and as Chaminade, Adèle, and Marie Thérèse did in post-revolutionary France.

Mary forms us as she formed Jesus—to live in community that is deeply relational, highly intentional, and keenly present to the individual person in their time and their place. United as brothers and sisters, we can challenge one another to take that first step together to “do whatever he tells you,” even if we are not ready to do so alone. We each have the capacity to live the Beatitudes:

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:

²⁶ Kelly Johnson, “Blessed Beginnings,” University of Dayton, August 19, 2019.

²⁷ Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, *Mary in Modern Spirituality* (St. Louis, MO: Maryhurst Press, 1966), 26-29.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mt. 5:1-12)

As Marianists, we are called by God, formed by Mary, and sent to bring Jesus alive in our world. “Our way is that of entering into the heart of any human community and seeking to transform it, with full participation, with acceptance, affirmation, and love, from within. . . . It challenges our culture and meets a deep-felt need.”²⁸

Reflection Following 10 minutes of quiet reflection, select one of the following questions to discuss with your table group.

1. Consider your community. How can you enter it differently to show acceptance, affirmation, and love?
2. How will you demonstrate missionary zeal in your life?

Missionary zeal: As a member of the Marianist Family, we are called to take on with great enthusiasm, Mary’s mission of nurturing the good work, the vital work, of bringing Jesus into our world today. This vital work must meet our neighbors where they are by listening deeply and openly, walking with and beside, and loving with a heart opened wide.

3. What is an action you can take today to build the Marian Church?

²⁸ David Fleming, SM, “Marianist Spirituality Today: A South Asian Perspective,” *The Promised Woman* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 1995), 58.



Resources for further reading:

(Available from North American Center for Marianist Studies, NACMS.org)

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