

**A REPORT TO THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER
“A WORK IN PROGRESS”
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 2005**

Introduction

In March 2005, the Provincial Chapter of the Province of the United States culminated a process of several years with the approval of the Province Mission Statement. At that same meeting of the Chapter, the following recommendation to the Provincial Council was also approved:

The Education Committee recommends that the Province and the Chapter not take up now the formulation of a Vision Statement as was originally proposed in the process just completed that produced the Mission Statement for the Province. Rather, it recommends that the Provincial Council, to the extent it deems necessary, review and revise its statement of priorities communicated to the Province in the Provincial’s letter of October 13, 2004.

Moreover, we believe that while we now have a fine Mission Statement, we are still in the process of coming together as a new province. Moreover, the Chapter has approved the general idea of organizing Corporate Reflection Groups as recommended by the Provincial Chapter Structures Commission in its November 13, 2004 document. We believe that further reflection on the recently published priorities of the Provincial Council, which draw upon the essential elements of our mission developed in our 2002 Province Assembly, will assist the Province as a whole in coming to a point in the near future when it will be fruitful to enter a process that will elaborate a comprehensive Vision Statement.

This document is, then, the Provincial Council’s response to the approval of the Province Mission Statement and the request of the Chapter to review its Priorities.

As the Council began the task requested by the recommendation, there were two things that struck us as important in completing the task:

- First, the task assigned to the Council can not be completed without dialogue with the members of the Province and the members of the Provincial Chapter. Therefore, the document presented here is a dialogue document. More dialogue is needed in the Province before any attempt can be made to move toward a vision statement for the Province. This task needs the reflection by all involved—Province members, the Provincial Chapter, and the Provincial Council.
- Second, there needs to be some clarity in the Province about the content of a vision statement. What do members of the Province and the Chapter understand by a vision statement? What specific ideas and information should be part of a vision statement?

At its June reflection meetings, the Council decided to do two reports. This document contains these two reports. The first part is a reflection by the Council on the Province Mission Statement: what has the Province worked at well that fulfills the mission, what needs more work, and what concerns do we see. The second part of the document reports on the Provincial Council priorities and orientations for 2004-2007. Again, we report on what the Province and the Council has done well, on what needs more work, and some concerns that the Council has.

The Council hopes that this report becomes a source of dialogue both among Province members and at the Provincial Chapter.

Province Mission Statement

As the Council views the mission statement, we see two parts. Although the distinction is not absolute, we see the first part of the mission statement speaking about our witness as Marianist religious and the second part of the mission statement as speaking about our service and ministry.

Witness (paragraph 1)

*Empowered by the Holy Spirit and
inspired by the dynamism of Blessed Chaminade's charism,
we—brothers and priests—vowed religious in the Marianist Family,
live in community as equals.
Through lives of prayer and Gospel service,
we dedicate ourselves
to the following of Jesus Christ,
Son of God become Son of Mary.*

a. Done well

- Our communities are, in general, homes of support and encouragement for the members. Our community life is important to us and we have the structures in place which enhance our communities. There is an evident sense of equality among the priests and the brothers. The sense of “family spirit” is noticed by those with whom we work and by those we serve. Regular hospitality seems to be present in most of our Province communities. The community facilities, in general, are well cared for and beauty is important. We create spaces for ourselves where we live comfortably with one another and invite others to share.
- There is a spirit of prayer within the Province. There is regularity in the ways we practice prayer as well as a variety of creative expressions which allow persons to use their own gifts and the gifts in the community. Communities have highlighted the Marian consecration prayers in a variety of ways. There is an increase of faith sharing experiences within our communities which allows us to know more about each other's faith journey as we grow toward holiness. There are a number of focused

conversations during the year which encourage our brothers to share more of their lives with each other.

- We believe the care for our senior members models Gospel service. The generosity of the members who lead and serve our health care facilities has been exceptional. Much time and energy has gone into the planning for the care of our brothers. These senior members are true treasures for the order. It has been impressive when communities in the same areas reach out to our older brothers.
- We see our senior members as a great resource of wisdom and holiness, often offering their quiet prayer and aging tribulations for the mission of the Province.
- The growth into the new Province of the United States has given us a better tolerance of the differences which exist among us. We are positively confronted by the different cultures and the way “we did things” which has allowed us to be open to new strategies for witnessing Marianist religious life.

b. Needs more work

- We are constantly challenged to live the Gospel more fully. Our unique way of life needs to be recognized as a witness to the Gospel. We believe our communities can continue to grow more into healthy and supportive places where our brothers continue to be called to holiness.
- We need to continue to grow in sense of service to one another and to the Province. As ministries to and for the Society of Mary become available, brothers need to step forward and respond to our needs. More generosity will be demanded. We will need to continue to be aware of our cultural biases, Provincial and ethnic, and learn to live beyond them. This will include moving to new locales with all the challenge such a move brings.
- We need to continue to explore new forms and models of religious community especially within our context of the Marianist Family. We will need to develop more effective ways to communicate with one another and, more importantly, to hear each other’s stories. We need to widen our parameters so we can include more brothers.

c. Concerns

- We will need to question more how we live amidst this first world culture. We need to review our lifestyles to see if they give the witness we want. Have we been too accommodating to a culture of consumerism?
- We will need to identify the leadership in our formation program as well as those who will care for our older brothers.

- We will need to grow in generosity and tolerance so we might have the adaptability to go wherever we are needed.

2. Service/Ministry

*Wherever we are sent
we invite others to share in Mary's Mission
of making Christ present in every age and culture
by forming persons and communities of apostolic faith
that advance justice and reconciliation.*

*Committed to education,
we minister especially with youth and in solidarity with the poor.*

a. Done well

- The universities, parishes, high schools, retreat centers and the works which serve the poor directly are all based on an invitation to bring others to share in Mary's Mission. The Marianist Educational Associates being developed at our universities is a fine example. In some of our high schools, Marianist faith sharing groups create a wonderful sense of mission. The staffs at parishes and retreat centers are closely aligned with the priests and brothers who serve there that the sense of Mary's mission is integral to the situation. The recent Board Development Task Force is focusing this sense of Mary's mission for the boards which give guidance to our institutions.
- The development of the Province website has given a public sense of this wide ranging mission in which we all share.
- The restructuring of our national development efforts has provided the possibility of a new look at the Mission of our lives and ministry.
- Province members have taken seriously the call to reflect on the intersection of faith and cultures. The Marianist Universities have committed themselves to exploring the various aspects of the intersections of faith and culture, especially through their study of present understandings of community. The Task Force on Faith and Culture has devised ways to address the issue of our Marianist Mission in every age and culture. They explored the spirituality of that task in the topics for this past summer's Province retreats. In the process of becoming the new Province of the United States, we have been confronted by more cultures than we expected and we are learning in the process.
- The communal nature of our life and our ministry is evidenced in the various groups which grow up around our ministries. High schools have faculty and staff faith-sharing groups and LIFE programs for students. The LIFE program in its new national format, has given this program renewed vigor, purpose and direction. The Marianist Educational Consortium (MEC) brings teachers and administrators

together from our institutions and shares with them this vision of collaboration. The review of the institutions by visiting teams and members of the Province Office of Education affirms the sense of community and challenges to growth. The formation of community is critical in all of our endeavors. It is the source of continuity. Communities of faith are present at the majority of our parishes, universities, retreat centers and high schools.

- Efforts are being made in the development of Marianist lay communities. Historically, most of these grow out of association with a Province ministry. Many have continued even after the departure of Marianist religious due to the faithfulness and tenacity of the people involved. The development over the last few years of a national network of Marianist lay groups and a growing relationship with the International Marianist Family are great signs of hope. The work of NACMS has assisted in the resources and expertise needed for the development of the Marianist Family. The Marianist Lay Formation Initiative is beginning to suggest ways that persons might grow into lay leaders of Marianist life.
- We have advanced justice in a number of ways. Our Province Office for Peace and Justice has been very energetic and moved us into new areas of growth. Its work with the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative is a challenge for us all. Our works which are inserted within the poor areas of the United States are making a valuable contribution. Our high school and universities ministries are designing ways to awaken students to service to the poor and a commitment to justice. Each of our educational institutions is building a tuition endowment to assist those who do not have the financial means to attend. The increase in the Marianist Sharing Fund is a means of sharing our resources to enable justice. Our ongoing support of our brothers in India, Mexico and Eastern Africa with resources and personnel is a commitment to solidarity with the poor. Most of our ministries in these overseas districts work directly with the poor and the marginalized. A real gift we share in the advancement of justice and reconciliation is the competent educational skills we give to our students so they may be effective in their choices. Our goal is that their choices will continue to be made in solidarity with the poor.

b. Needs more work

- In our ministerial efforts, we need to become more and more explicit concerning what it means to be Marianist. The Chaminade Project is challenging each of us to refresh our vision of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade and once again catch the fervor of spreading the Gospel with all the means we have at our hands. Our efforts with the Marianist Family will continue to clarify and fortify our relationship with each other. We need to be true partners in this project.
- We need to continually evaluate our interaction with the poor so we do not lose focus on this call of the Gospel. We need to coordinate and collaborate our efforts in as many ways as possible. We need to work together with each other and with the poor. We will need to continue to grow in generosity so that our work with the poor makes demands upon us. We need to continue the conversation about how we are in

solidarity with the poor and begin to evaluate what could be more effective and needed.

- We need to look to the future and begin to train leaders for Marianist Family leadership.
- The Provincial Council, in consultation with Province members, needs to make decisions about our Marianist presence in our parishes and other ministries. We need to creatively design ways to continue Marianist presence in situations where we will no longer have religious personnel to continue the mission.

c. Concerns

- We live in a society and a church which has opposing points of views. There is a noticeable divisiveness in many of the situations in which we work. We need to build bridges across these divisions so we can be a witness to our society and our church.

Provincial Council Priorities and Orientations 2004-2007

In the summer of 2004, the Provincial Council reviewed the directions it had set for its service for the first two years of our service. We also welcomed a new member to the Council during our June planning meetings. This transition gave us an opportunity to review our service and set priorities and orientations for the final three years of our service from 2004-2007. The following is a brief report on the fulfillment of these priorities and orientations.

1. We will provide leadership for the Province community to articulate, own and implement the Province Mission Statement.

Although the approval of the Province Mission Statement is very recent (March 2005), members of the Council were involved seriously in the articulation process over the past two years. The ownership and the implementation of the Mission Statement will be a focus of the Council's energy in the next two years. We have already decided on three things as a Council to assist in this process of ownership and implementation:

- The Council reflected on the mission statement at its June meetings to create a dialogue document on the mission statement. The results of our reflection are expressed above.
- The Council has invited each local community to reflect on the mission statement when it begins its planning meetings for the community/ministry year 2005-2006. We are asking community members and then communities to reflect on three questions:
Which phrase or phrases of the Mission Statement most inspire and motivate me as a member of the Province?

What are we doing in our local community that is fulfilling the Mission Statement?

In what areas does the Mission Statement challenge our community to deepen its life or do something new?

- Members of the Provincial Council will address the Mission Statement in their presentations to Communities during visitations during the coming year

2. We will continue to develop leadership among the younger members of the Province.

During the past years, we have intentionally invited and appointed younger members of the Province to leadership positions, to Province committees, and institutional governance structures. We believe Province members, in general, have considered this development in the choice of Provincial and General Chapter members. We have not consciously worked at choosing mentors for our young leaders.

We need to continue to identify the future personnel for formation and for service within the order. We need to look not only at ministerial skills, but also the development of skills such as facilitation, strategic planning, conflict resolution and spiritual direction.

3. We will continue to focus energy on the ongoing development of Province members.

The Provincial Council has supported the ongoing efforts to build a strong vocation program, continuing to invite all communities into a “culture of vocations.” The Province Vocation Office has recruited twenty members of the Province to be involved in initial contacts with vocation prospects (e.g. phone calls). The Council has strengthened the initial formation program with the appointment of a coordinator for our members in temporary profession.

Given the challenges to living a celibate commitment in our American culture, the Council will work to develop a strong ongoing formation program for living celibacy faithfully and fully. Plans are in process for workshops during the coming year to train all Province members on Child Protection and to provide opportunities for some Province members to attend a workshop on healthy celibate living.

We need to continue to investigate ways to gather our brothers for growth (e.g., Chapter reflection groups; age-group gatherings, etc.) Since work on Province committees and projects often enriches a member’s commitment to the Province, we need to make sure our committees are truly representative and inclusive.

4. We will continue to provide leadership for the Province community to focus and prioritize our ministries within the new Province Mission Statement.

The Provincial Council committed itself to focus energy on the development of our institutional commitments. This commitment has been a major focus of work during the past year and will continue to be so for the two years to come. This commitment includes:

- Giving direction to our Marianist network of sponsored schools through the implementation of the sponsorship document. Most of the schools have entered into and celebrated the sponsorship agreement. It is hoped that this process will be completed soon. The Office of Education will complete team visitations and evaluations of each of the sponsored schools by June 2006. The Marianist Educational Consortium workshops and programs continue to be positive means for leadership formation and development of school personnel in the Province network. It is hoped that a board formation program will take place in the fall of 2006.
- The Association of Marianist Universities has continued to develop and the Council continues its support and participation. The Marianist University Meetings that take place each summer have contributed to this development. The initiative of a process of developing Marianist Educational Associates on each campus gives hope for Marianist lay leadership at each of the Universities.
- The hiring of Dr. George Lisjak to work with the Province Office of Education will help foster stronger relationships among our three Marianist universities and the Province network of sponsored schools
- The work of the Province Director of Justice and Peace, in collaboration with members of the Provincial Council, has challenged our communities and ministries to articulate and deepen our individual and corporate responses to advancing of justice.

There are still challenges to be met in the future:

- The Province Assistant for Religious Life has completed his visitation of all of the parishes in which we are serving. The Council is still working on creating a plan for future participation in parish ministry and a strategic use of our personnel committed to parish ministry
- Although a preliminary effort has been made, the Office of Education is still working on a conversation among those vowed Marianists working in elementary education.
- Although the Council has worked at strengthening the coordination of the Province's material resources with our ministry priorities, work still needs to be done. The Council has identified the priorities for our development office. Work still needs to be done unifying our development efforts.

- Some decisions have been made on the use of Province properties to achieve greater alignment of resources and ministry priorities. Some properties are being renovated for new uses and others have been sold. There are still property decisions to be made
- The creation of a Province Financial Advisory Board to assist the Provincial Council in the stewardship of its endowment resources.

5. We will make new ministry initiatives

The Provincial Council has focused energy on our response to the new immigrants to our country. The Province will initiate a ministry directed to their needs. A community serving the Hispanic community will open in the Diocese of Charlotte, North Carolina this ministry and community year.

The Marianist Volunteer Program has been launched. The Provincial Council will continue to work with the Director and members of the Marianist Family to strengthen and increase this new ministry in the Province.

The Provincial Council will continue to pursue our corporate involvement in a school serving the poor and the marginalized. Some investigation has been done by the Province Office of Education. This corporate response might be the development of a present program, for example the expansion of the Marianist Urban Student Program to new sites or collaborating with the University of Dayton and our other Universities in expanding a program like the Lalanne program. Success in fund-raising efforts will have a strong influence on what we can do in this area.

When we began our service, the Council was considering the investigation of a new international foundation either from our own Province or collaboratively with another Province or Region once Korea and India became independent. Korea has achieved independence. India and Eastern Africa are moving in that direction although this development will take some time yet. Mexico has achieved financial independence through the Viyao trust. However it is a long way from having the indigenous personnel needed for independence. During their visit, the members of the General Administration challenged the Council to consider its commitments in Puerto Rico and Ireland before considering another new foundation.

6. We will provide leadership in “bridge building”

The Provincial Council, through an effort it has named, *the Chaminade Project*, has focus energy on the development of a deeper Province identity. A greater awareness of our blessed founder and martyrs has grown but more needs to be done to seize the grace of the moment.

The Provincial Council has continued to sponsor a strong communication effort and has tried to more clearly communicate its initiatives to the Province. FAMILY ONLINE,

ALIVE, and the Province website have received much positive comment both from members of the Province and our collaborators.

We are aware of the continuing need to develop ways to foster a sense of belonging on the part of local communities and individuals to the larger group of the Province community. Members of the Provincial Council have been at all of the Province jubilee celebrations and have made efforts to be present when possible at Province funerals. The Provincial Council will continue to build the identity of the new Province through its method of sharing and presence during community visitations. This past year the interview of members and the visitations of communities were done by the General Administration. Provincial Council members did make an effort to be present to each individual and to each community during the year. This community/ministry year Council members will again do visitations of all communities and individuals with a special focus on the Province Mission Statement.

The Provincial Council continues to work at the development of collaboration in geographic clusters where there are several communities of the Society of Mary. This has worked well in some areas and needs support and encouragement in other areas.

The Provincial Council has focused on continued collaboration with the other members of the Marianist family through the Marianist Family Council of North America. A special emphasis has been put on the development of the Family Council's two present initiatives: the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative and the Marianist Lay Formation Initiative.

When we reported our priorities last year, the Council noted a significant number of members and collaborators who are experiencing alienation from the institutional church. Although the Council has done some reading on this issue and had reflective discussions among ourselves, we have not come up with a clear program to proactively address this alienation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to give the Chapter and the members of the Province a starting point for conversation and dialogue. As a Provincial Council, we know we serve you. It is your energy and work that has made our Province Mission statement more than words on a page. But there is room for growth. As the Chapter and our membership design ways to make our dialogue more effective, we present this document as part of that process.

As we as a Province spend time reviewing our life style and our ministries, we must keep in mind that our world and our Church are in the midst of great change. We are part of that world and church and these realities impact us. Our dialogue about mission and priorities hopefully will help us find healthy ways to confront these large changes in our church and world. Blessed Chaminade confronted great change in his world. We must be the "founders" now who read the signs of the time.

In this process, we must acknowledge and recognize the pain and hurt that our recent changes have caused. It is not enough to say that “pain comes with change.” Our brothers are hurting and we need to hear them and support them to the extent we are able. We must live through this hurt together in order to healthily grow.

In conclusion, we believe we all know that our Marianist life is a valid following of Jesus. Most recently, we have the testimony of the church with the recognition of Blessed Chaminade as a person worthy of devotion. Also, we have been blessed with a number of our brothers being recognized as martyrs for God’s reign. Beyond our declared blessed brothers, we have our experience of the “saints” with whom we have lived. Our life has been and can be a life of true holiness. It has been that way since the beginning. Our history tells us that in different styles, cultures, and ways of living this life is worthwhile. We also believe in the words of our Brother, Jesus, who promised to be with us until the end of time. Let us recommit ourselves to our mission and vision so it may continue long after we are gone.