

Mackey Lecture Series
“A Marian Dimension of Church”
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Thank you so much for that very warm welcome. It is good to be here and come to Hawai'i again. As I was telling someone this past weekend, *pilihome*. I am home.

When Carol, Isabella and I met in preparation for this lecture series, and brainstormed on how we were going to stage our presentation, it was clear that we needed a short time describing our personal faith stories, especially regarding our experience of church. Therefore, I would like to take you on a journey that begins a little over 50 years ago.

- I was born in 1956 in New York City, the Bronx to be exact. Blessed Pope John XXIII was elected in 1958. I was two years old.
- The opening session of the Second Vatican Council was October 1962. I was six years old.
- The last session of the Council was completed in December 1965. I was not yet 10 and was in the fifth grade.
- The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was approved in 1963. I have no knowledge of liturgical Latin and only a faint memory of the priest facing a wall during liturgy.
- While Catholic Americans rejoiced in the election of the first Catholic president in 1961, I was five and had no experience of Catholics not being part of mainstream America, or that anti-Catholic sentiment existed in the United States.

All of these religious and ecclesial events occurred before I graduated from eighth grade.

- In December 1955, Rosa Parks refused to ride in the back of the bus. For the next year, no African-American person rode the public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time, I was in my mother's womb.
- In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. I was in the second grade.

- The March on Selma, Alabama, took place in spring 1965, with religious leaders of all churches holding hands, and with sisters, brothers and priests leading the way. I was one month shy of nine years old.
- The Vietnam War moved into high gear and the anti-war protests were led by students and adults in many cities. In May 1968, The Catonsville Nine made headlines. All nine members of this group were Catholic; five were members of religious orders: two Jesuits, two Maryknolls and one Christian Brother (Frs. Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Bro. David Darst, Bro. John Hogan, Fr. Thomas Melville).
- In June 1969, the Stonewall Riots occurred in Greenwich Village, New York, and the Gay Civil Rights movement was born. A month later, Neil Armstrong was the first person to step on the moon.
- In between all these events, President John Kennedy was shot in 1963, followed by Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy in 1968.

All of these cultural and social events occurred before I was 13 years of age.

As you can see from this short trip into the past, my religious education and formation, and the social and cultural world I was part of, were in a state of flux.

Now you may say, "Thank you for this history lesson, but what do these events have to do with a Marian way of being church?" In reflecting on my experiences of the world and the church of my youth, I had some insights:

- The church is always changing and adapts to the world and its needs.
- Catholics, as members of the church, are active agents in creating a more just and peaceful place in my urban neighborhood, in my country, and in my life.
- The church is in the world and religious men and women are not only part of the world, they are in the world working for peace, justice and neighborhood stabilization.
- God loved me and loved the world, working through people and history (salvation history).
- Jesus becomes human because we are essentially good and God wants to be part of the human experience (the incarnation).
- I was taught that:
 - Easter (resurrection) is more important than Good Friday (crucifixion).
 - Mass is the people's prayer as they participate in the ritual, and the musical instrument of the church is the guitar.
 - Vocation starts at baptism.
 - The Confirmation song of "Onward Christian Soldiers" was replaced by "They will know we are Christians by our love!"

- Families with many children practiced the rhythm method, and families with fewer children practiced birth control.
- Christian marriage was celebrated (not just Roman Catholic marriage) because Christians share a special bond
- Lastly, and maybe the most important, it is okay to disagree with church (and country) and still say I am a Catholic (and American). In fact, it was more common to say I was a Christian than a Roman Catholic.

One of my last religious studies courses in college was the examination of the newly published book *Models of the Church* written by Avery Dulles (1978). While he describes five models – Church as Institution, as Mystical Communion, as Sacrament, as Herald, and as Servant – I realized I was raised in a model of church that saw itself as servant. So, while the generations of Catholics before me were being reeducated in theology and the laity were taking their rightful place in the church, I knew fundamentally that my vocation started at baptism, and that “the Church should consider itself as part of the total human family, sharing the same concerns as the rest of men (and women).” (Page 91)

In 1985 I professed vows as a Marianist religious and a different dimension of church became my reality, namely a **Community of Equal Disciples**.

For us Marianists, and maybe for many of you here, many aspects come to mind when one hears the term “a Marian way of being church.” Some of those characteristics are maternal and nurturing, charitable and affirming, forming and creating unity. For us, church is a verb and happens at a round table where all are welcomed. It includes consensus building, embodies shared leadership, is inclusive and gives rights to women and the non-ordained. A Marian dimension of church is formative, shapes its members in faith and honors peoples’ stories. If I may use a Marianist expression, it has something to do with “from cradle to grave.”

In addition, we Marianists believe our best way of being church is in sharing faith, especially in small communities. If we had more time, the three of us would form small groups in this place and ask you to talk about these characteristics, and chances are you would come up with some other characteristics.

Drawing from my experience of the church in my formative years and mixed with my theological reflection of my adult years, especially as a Marianist, I would like to look at some characteristics of Mary I believe can aid us to be a better church – **The Faith-Filled Disciple** and **the Observant Householder**. I believe both these characteristics are intrinsic to leadership and mission which I was asked to reflect on this afternoon.

MARY IN THE SCRIPTURES

We do not have time to explore all the references to Mary in the Scriptures to search for characteristics of a Marian dimension of church, so I would like to look at two references, the Annunciation and the Wedding Feast of Cana.

We are all familiar with the story of the Angel Gabriel revealing to Miriam of Nazareth that she will become the Mother of the Messiah – a long awaited event in the quest of her ancestors. Many artists have depicted a passive young woman waiting for this revelation and the Holy Spirit impregnating Mary (Let it be done to me!) However, when we read the story carefully, we notice different characteristics. Mary is a young woman who knows her reality, what is possible, and what God has promised. Therefore, she must believe that God is alive, hears prayers and is active. Does she not listen to the messenger and believe in his identity? Mary never questions the origin of the angel. Therefore, while demons, devils and evil may exist, God's messengers, angels, and goodness are just as real.

Secondly, Mary is very much in touch with her emotions and is disturbed (Do not be afraid, Mary) and knows her own body and sexuality. (How can this be, since I am a virgin?) Lastly, this Miriam opens her world to a new possibility of what can happen, not what should happen. She risks all she knows to something that she does not know. Her faith is her ability to say yes and give a human body to God. In other words, Mary's faith makes possible God's entrance into history. Her "yes" is a faith event, making her the ideal disciple. (*Elizabeth Johnson*)

At the Wedding Feast of Cana, we see another side of Mary, this time more daring and courageous. If Mary, Jesus and his family and friends were at a Jewish wedding as guests, we know the women and men were separated at the wedding due to cultural and social status. (Remember the scene of the wedding from *Fiddler on the Roof*.) Moreover, we do not have to rehash the terrible sexism that existed at that time in history, and still exists throughout the world today. In this Gospel story, Mary sees a critical unmet need (they have no wine), and the consequences of that situation (embarrassment of the bride and groom). Mary does not just pray for a solution. Instead, she leaves the safety of her social status (crosses the rope), finds Jesus and tells him they have no wine.

While Mary brings Jesus to his awareness of his mission, I would like to suggest that Mary is, in fact, the hero in this story. She is the observant householder and acts to bring about a change. Again, Mary plays a critical part in helping to bring God's presence in the world (God's salvation). Her profound heart of mercy moves her to become an active agent of change and grace, a participant of justice because she observes the world

with faith. Again, as in the Annunciation, she awaits the dramatic unfolding of God's plan, this time by inviting Jesus to leadership and ministry.

A Marian dimension of church understands the social, psychological, physical and sexual needs of its members – it is, as I was taught this weekend, Ka Pono – everything in balance. A Marian model respects science, technology and the physical laws of nature but it also believes deeply that God acts within time and nature, and sometimes, miracles do occur. Members who see themselves with these characteristics are observant, dialoguing culture, and intervene as agents of grace.

They are faith-filled people who have a vision and see beyond what “might be,” “could be” and “ought to be.” They put aside their own agenda and status, cross boundaries and believe taking the risk is important. Leadership within a Marian model is worth the risk because the goals extend beyond material gain or personal advancement. A church that is fashioned with these Marian characteristics is comfortable in the role of the observant householder, actively works to bring about change and invites others to mission and ministry. Together, with God, this church says “yes” and brings a new reality into being because together they are a faith-filled community of disciples.

MARIANIST MISSION (IN MISSION WITH MARY)

As you celebrate 125 years of Marianist presence in this great state, what can we draw from our Marianist understanding of a Marian church? I believe it has something to do with mission, not only for the Marianist Family here in Hawai'i but also for the local and global church.

From the very beginnings of our existence, the Marianist family has had an understanding that we are a community of equal disciples, gathered together with respect for each person's gifts and talents and sent in mission. That deep value has penetrated our organizational structures, as laity, sisters, brothers and priests. All are welcomed; gifts and talents determine leadership, not gender, sexual orientation, race, or ordination. In a true community of equal disciples, ministry is about vocation – not rank or status. This way of being church connects us not by the practice of similar rituals, but by its understanding of the diversity of its members.

An essential characteristic of a Marian model is that community is real and that what happens to one member affects others, whether that member is across the street or in another part of the world. Our founders passed onto us a leadership model that embodies a belief that we are all gifted leaders with specific talents to do mission and we invite others to this way of being church. It is also a behavioral attitude that pushes us to the margins without safety nets, constantly looking for those critical unmet needs

and moving into mission. We are all leaders, and we are leading all the time, often in small, unintended ways as faith-filled disciples of Jesus. The incarnational spirituality that fascinated Fr. Chaminade continues to penetrate our mission, helping us find God in the simple, concrete experiences of people every day.

Another characteristic of this dimension of church is that it is richly historical, has a tradition, but at the same time is rooted in a shifting world. **Therefore, a dimension of a Marian church is its ability to observe the world and be relational and charitable before it is efficient.** Our Marianist way of being emphasizes community and family spirit. This style contributes a much-needed approach of ecclesial relationships, which otherwise can become authoritarian and stilted. Like Mary, we emphasize the role of nurturing life, forming people, affirming their stories, creating unity, all within a common mission. These characteristics are also found in good and effective leaders.

Last, I would like to touch briefly on our Marianist Mission, at least the way I understand it. Again, this is a Reader's Digest version, and we can spend an entire weekend on this topic. However, from my experience of church, what do I see as essential elements for a Marian way of Church? I see three important elements (*drawn from documents from our 33rd General Chapter of the Society of Mary*).

- **To transmit our Marianist heritage to the church and to the world**
 - Marianist Mission is about evangelization and vocation. As I experienced church as a child, the world knew that the Catholic Church was not silent in its beliefs. I think we need to tell the world what we are about: that we have a charism that belongs not only to all branches of the Marianist Family, but also to the people of God. Now that we have beatified members of our family, including Fr. Chaminade, our charism belongs to the entire church. At the same time, each branch must manifest itself according to its own proper nature. As written in the report of the 33rd General Chapter of the Society of Mary entitled "In Mission with Mary," it is in people that the Marianist charism comes to life.

- **To open the world to faith, to bridge the faith and culture chasm**
 - Our Marianist universal mission acts in the midst of the world. It is inserted in reality and then discerns the opportunities that are needed for a renewed faith and mission. At the same time, our mission uses all means possible – cultural, spiritual, psychological, socio-sexual, etc. – that can contribute to the wholeness of a person and form them in faith.

- **To continue to grow in the efforts for justice, peace, integrity of creation and reconciliation**
 - The inspiration we find in the person of Mary is a woman of compassion who has a thirst for justice and harmony, who is in solidarity with the poor, and who longs for another kind of world (not heaven but expressed in the Magnificat). Marianist Mission states that our community of equal disciples gives significant example to the world and the church that we have a model and example to incarnate a challenge to a world divided by caste, class, culture, religion and ethnicity. Like the church of my youth, all its members find their foundation in baptism. To be baptized demands we have active roles in bringing about the reign of God.

SUMMARY

It is my firm belief that a Marian dimension of church is not a model of church; rather it is a dimension, a way of being and acting which permeates other models, including the Petrine and Pauline models of church. Any model of church must honor the traditional perspective in light of growing Catholic evolutionary consciousness of the 21st century. A hallmark of Catholic spirituality is its “both/and” and “already/not yet” approach, which makes room for important self-criticism needed to reach our full potential as one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Over-emphasizing one or another model will lead to mischief within Catholicism. For example, push too hard on the church as hierarchy and the result is an inflated notion of authority; put too much stress on the people of God and you get congregationalism.

Before we hear from Carol and Isabella, I would like to summarize. Mary is arguably the most celebrated woman in Christian tradition. Who can count the number of paintings, sculptures, and icons, the music and poetry, the liturgies and feasts, spiritual writings and other doctrines that pay tribute to her? Every generation, every land, every culture on the earth has honored her. Therefore, the Marian church is the best example we have in how to live in a multicultural, all-inclusive church for the 21st century.

At the same time, it is constantly adapting itself to meet the needs of the world, and believes it has an active role in working with God to bring about that change. Mary is disturbed at the Annunciation because the work of the Spirit can be disturbing, but we are confident that there will be wine for everyone, because we are ALL agents of grace and change, because our God is alive and well. It is a deep belief that God has some great things in store for us and for the world.

Carol Ramey

I work as an historian of Marianist life and am a life-long learner in Marianist spirituality. I have situated myself within the Marianist arena for over 40 years. I do read some theological texts, but I am not a theologian. My thinking about the Marian dimension of church comes from a great interest in how the Marianist spirit might promote such a dimension and how such a dimension challenges the way we live Marianist life. My personal interests aside, the Mackey Lecture series is sponsored in order to promote “Catholicism in Prophetic Dialogue,” so I am hoping our time together may launch dialogue among us in the larger Catholic community around the Marian dimension of Church.

First I will offer a little about what happened in my life that made the Marianist charism so attractive. By the age of 18, I had lived in eight houses, six cities, and four states. My faith formation was primarily memorizing the Baltimore Catechism and watching the dedicated lives of the sisters who were my teachers. I attended Latin Mass for many years. I arrived at the University of Dayton in time to study the documents of Vatican II, which were hot off the press—collegiality, subsidiarity and Mary’s role in the Church were huge topics! There was a vibrant Marianist Sodality on campus and I joined in my freshman year. I quickly understood that Marianist spirituality, with its regard and trust for the laity, already included the concepts behind *The People of God* and the *universal call to holiness*.

While there, I also witnessed the dizzying change coming about through movements for civil rights, women’s rights, and a rising culture of youth—remember, “Don’t trust anyone over 30!” Vietnam. Urban renewal. Assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy took place during my college years. Many I knew in religious life were questioning the governance and traditional ministries of their vowed life. A good number departed—some out of the church completely, some to try to sculpt the new vision of church as parishioners and/or as Lay Marianists, according to the ideals of Vatican II.

After graduation, I moved to sleepy little Kent, Ohio, home to Kent State University. Well, that did not turn out to be a very calm experience! I was immediately helping out in a parish that offered draft counseling for Catholic conscientious objectors. The horror of the campus riots and shootings happened as I rocked my newborn son on a porch under a blossoming apple tree—an unsettling image I will never forget. My child was baptized while jeeps with mounted machine guns patrolled the streets. Through college and the first years of young adult life, just about everything was in turmoil. I was a

faithful Catholic, but I certainly was questioning how my faith could possibly equip me to address all the evil situations and needs of those times.

Are you surprised that I was attracted to a spiritual family within the Catholic Church that has a vow of *stability* at its core? But to be fair, stability does not mean staying in place, as in the traditional Benedictine view.

The vow of stability is about Mary. Marianists believe that Mary helps us, as she helped our founders, to reestablish faith and church life not by clinging to the past, but by creating something that carries forth the teachings and traditions while adapting to the times. “Under Mary’s banner,” as he liked to say, Father Chaminade created his new enterprise in the image of the early Christian communities. We align ourselves with Mary for **her mission** to bring Christ into the world at all times, in all places. I am biased, but suspect that this spirituality is a fine underpinning for promoting a Marian dimension of church.

When the Marian, the Petrine, and the Pauline gifts to the church are working in a synergistic fashion, I am struck by how similarly the values and behaviors mirror characteristics of Marianist spirit. Let me spend some time talking about practical expressions of a Marian dimension and how it deepens and sustains us in the Body of Christ.

The best place to look for how the Petrine, the Marian, and the Pauline dimensions work together is, I think, from the Acts of the Apostles—the book where we visit the nascent church and its members. Early in the narrative we find Mary and the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. We hear of the coming of the Holy Spirit and how Peter, in his first days in his job as “the rock,” explained Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection and the Spirit to the befuddled multitudes. We are told how the community of believers treated one another with exceptional support. We learn of the first martyr.

Paul joins the disciples, after initially being turned away because of their suspicions about him. We read about Peter in the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and what a transformative experience that was. Arrests and trials abound. Saul becomes Paul. Travels to evangelize are initiated. And, the quarrels begin—the first Council of Jerusalem must have been a doozy.

I am assuming that a Church in harmony with the Petrine and Pauline strains will

- gather together to discuss, discern, deliberate and decide
- look for the Spirit in the midst of the community
- recognize authentic leadership and work for structures that free people to respond to God’s call

It will also

- treat its members with dignity, generosity and trust
- accept the stranger or the outsider
- be open to transformation in unexpected ways
- take the risks necessary to carry the Gospel out to the globe, staying in touch with new members to inspire and correct
- be comfortable with disagreements and together seek the truth as best it can be known

Now, presumably, after Pentecost, Mary is with John, maybe in Ephesus. So, we look for her influence from the history of the early church, but more importantly, from ecclesiology and Mary's place in the church.

The Vatican II document, *Lumen Gentium*, holds that the Marian dimension is "connected to the whole communion of saints, living and dead" (*Truly Our Sister*, 131), and results from her being "united with her Son in the work of salvation from his birth to her presence at his side in heaven" (*Truly Our Sister*, 129). The document says, "As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ" (§63) [also *Truly Our Sister*, 130]. "As a model, she signals what the church is called to be at its spiritual best." There are, of course, critics to the document. A person whom Elizabeth Johnson cites in *Truly Our Sister* is Anne Carr, who is concerned that "Mary is idealized because of her receptivity to God's grace, but not for agency and power."

A few years later, in 1974, in *Marialis Cultus* Paul VI writes that we model ourselves after Mary "as an example for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted God's will (Lk 1:38), because she heard the Word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples" (§35).

The most perfect disciple did not just teach us passive virtues. At Calvary, the most perfect disciple stayed, when others hid. The most perfect disciple stood, when others might have collapsed in agony and despair. The most perfect disciple heard her son give her and John into each other's care as Mother and son (which, of course, means she accepted a new call to embrace all the church as Mother). Talk about power and agency!

And reading these passages makes me smile because Father Chaminade was onto many of these truths far ahead of Vatican II. I do not have time to go into all of this; you will have to trust me. The point is that Chaminade knew Mary is key to knowing, loving,

and serving Jesus. She is key to understanding discipleship. She is key to being part of and responsible for the Church.

And she was key to me when, from my life experiences and from Marianist spirit, I realized that our faith, our spirituality, cannot be confined to even the best of parishes or small faith-sharing communities. Community is gathered and **sent**—I think that is why Mary was there in the Upper Room. To remind the disciples that Jesus said, “Go and teach all nations.” He did not say, “Stay here, share your stories, and pass the pita.” He said, GO! And I think this is what Mary said because it would be consistent with her *Magnificat*. How are all those reversals of the meek and the arrogant, powerful and oppressed, rich and poor, going to happen unless we get off our cushions and GO?

In closing, I will mention an article written in 1992 by Bro. Steve Glodek, SM, the current provincial of the Society of Mary in the United States. He was writing about the meaning of Mary’s *fiat* and the challenges she sings about in the *Magnificat*. He said,

It is to the chanting of a new *Magnificat* that we are called: the celebration of God’s action in our world and our response in faith. This response in faith must be a careful, critical discernment of both “yes” and “no.” It needs to be a response of “yes” to the uplifting of God’s people to God and a response of “no” to all that impedes or works against that uplifting. (Stephen Glodek, SM, *Promised Woman*, p. 363).

So, add to the list I made from the Acts of the Apostles about dimensions of the Petrine and Pauline characteristics, these ways in which a Marian dimension will bring a harmony of holiness...

It will allow us to live full of hope in ambiguous circumstances.

It will say “yes” and “no” with courage.

It will call us to respond when others “have no wine.”

It will be present to those who struggle with faith, with life.

It will sing songs about humility and right relationships.

It will know that hearts are pierced, but that God heals.

It will know that God’s ways are often confusing at first (or longer).

It will ask with whom we should stand when lines are drawn in the sand.

It will embrace those given to us by God for comfort, support, and direction, especially when all about them is in darkness.

It will call our church to be at its spiritual best!

All these points in describing the Marian dimension of Church will have to be done with cultural sensitivity and wisdom. As Walter Brueggemann said,

There is no one single or normative model of church life. It is dangerous and distorting for the church to opt for an absolutist model that it insists upon in every circumstance.... Or to put it positively, models of the church must not be dictated by cultural reality, but they must be voiced and practiced in ways that take careful account of the particular time and circumstance into which God's people are called. Every model of the church must be critically contextual.¹

I am honored to be in Hawai'i with you as you celebrate 125 years of Marianist presence. I trust you will take all we have said today into your cultural reality and see if it fits. I will hold you and your efforts to be in prophetic dialogue in prayer. Thank you.



Isabella Moyer

Women and the Marian Church

PERSONAL STORY

A pendulum is the image that best describes my faith journey. I was born in January 1959 – the same month that Pope John XXIII announced to the world that he was going to convene the Second Vatican Council. I'm a Vatican II baby . . . and yes, 50 is breathing down my neck!

¹Walter Brueggemann, "Rethinking Church Models Through Scripture" in *Theology Today*, vol. 48, no. 2 (July 1991) p. 128.

My birthplace is Birkenhead, England, just across the Mersey Channel from Liverpool, home of the Beatles. My faith pendulum began far to the right. My parents, both Polish refugees, were granted asylum in England after WWII. My early childhood was filled with tradition - old churches, incense, statues and candles, rosaries, pilgrimages and images of Our Lady of Czestochowa. I loved reading stories of saints and martyrs. I had a music box from Lourdes with a "glow-in-the-dark" Mary and St. Bernadette. Sunday missals were bilingual, English on one side and Latin on the other. We had a Baltimore style of Catechism. Memorization ruled. *Who is God?* God is a Supreme Being! Understanding was not required.

My family moved to Winnipeg, Canada in 1967, the country's centennial year. Our parish community joined an Anglican congregation to build a new church. We attended the laying of the cornerstone that read "That they may be one." It was blessed by the Anglican bishop and Cardinal George Flahiff of Winnipeg - a Council Father at Vatican II and a good man. At the 1971 Synod of Bishops in Rome, Cardinal Flahiff formally requested the church to open the discussion on admitting women to all the ministries.

Our Catholic community of John XXIII (now Blessed John XXIII) staggered Mass times with St. Chad's Anglican services. The only time members joined the sister community for worship was when we forgot to move our clocks forward or back for daylight savings time and ended up at the wrong service!

Our post Vatican II, ecumenical efforts resulted in an auditorium style worship space, bare of any statues or pictures. Catechism classes turned to arts and crafts. *Who is God?* God is love, rainbows and butterflies! We listened to Simon and Garfunkel, Joni Mitchell and Buffy Sainte-Marie for wisdom. The faith pendulum had taken a swift and extreme swing to the left.

I met my husband, David, at a Marianist Lay Community for young adults in Winnipeg in the late 1970's. These student years were wonderful years in my faith life - retreats, prayers, open questions and discussions, weekends at the lake . . . all thanks to the Marianist brothers in Winnipeg.

David and I were married in 1981 and moved to the small town of Neepawa, Manitoba, where we set up his dental practice and began our family life.

EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH

In 1993 I began studying theology through the Catholic Distance University in Virginia. It was a very orthodox and conservative program, accredited by the Pontifical Council for the Clergy . . . and I loved it! My faith pendulum happily swung to the right again. Orthodoxy gave me the answers I was seeking – all in a lovely black and white.

Faith formation was limited in our rural, prairie parish. A generation before, religious sisters travelled from parish to parish to give two weeks of catechetical lessons to the children. As parents, they felt inadequate to be catechists themselves. I began teaching several adult faith formation programs. The classes were popular. I had found my true vocation!

I also had an early retirement – a very early retirement, thanks to an insecure, authoritarian pastor and an even more authoritarian bishop who felt that I had stepped over clerical boundaries by teaching adults. I sat miserably in the pew and listened to talks on the importance of adult faith formation and the dire shortage of catechists.

I wasn't the only target. It was a sad, dysfunctional time in our parish and diocese. Heads rolled at all levels. Priests, religious, lay all felt the wrath of the bishop and his close circle. Today, we have a bishop of integrity, but the hurts and damage of that time have taken a long time to heal.

It was a real faith crisis for me. I felt rejected not only by our priest, but by our faith community. Friends were sympathetic and angry at the situation, but no one spoke for fear of retribution. Yet, during this dark time, our loving God was ready to open the proverbial doors for me – doors that opened to the Marianist Family.

MARIANIST JOURNEY

Still licking my wounds, I travelled to Rome for the beatification of Jakob Gapp in 1995 as a guest of our dear friend and Marianist mentor, Raymond Roussin, SM, who had just been ordained a bishop. It was my first experience of the world Marianist Family, and it awakened me to the international gift that our charism is, celebrated and lived in a glorious tapestry of cultures. The warm welcome of our brothers in Rome reminded

me of how good it was to be with Marianists . . . the same warm welcome David and I have experienced here in Hawai'i!

Back in Manitoba, I accepted the role of local area representative for our Marianist Lay Communities and I haven't looked back.

Carol spoke of an instinctive feeling that the Marian dimension of Church might be understood in a dialogue with Marianist spirituality. I've been having that dialogue for many years, trying to better understand my experience with my local church. What was missing? What brings me such ongoing unrest?

My local church continues to suffer from clericalism among some of her pastors who believe they own the parish and reflect it in an authoritarian style of leadership.

In the Marianist family, we seek to live a true discipleship of equals – acknowledging that priesthood is a gift to be used for the good of the community, not a source of power to be abused.

In my local church lay people are to fill the pews, listen obediently, and pay generously. Lay women and men are given a voice on parish and diocesan councils, but are constantly reminded that theirs is only a consultative role. All power rests with the ordained.

In the Marianist Family, we value collaboration and model this in our mission, our projects, and in our Marianist Family Councils. At the World Marianist Family Council, the Society of Mary, the Daughters of Mary, Marianist Lay Communities and the Alliance Mariale, all have an equal voice and an equal vote.

In my local church, I experienced the pain of misogyny – for myself, and in the everyday conversations with some priests. Woman's place is in the kitchens of the church. Not in the boardrooms and definitely not in the dining room . . . unless it's to clean the linens and candles!

In the Marianist family, I was never made to feel 'lesser than' because I was a woman. Collaboration is needed and valued to ensure that temporal, spiritual, and educational needs are met. As Jack said so well, "All are welcomed; gifts and talents determine leadership, not gender, sexual orientation, race, or ordination."

In my local church I was silenced.

In the Marianist Family not only is my voice heard, but I am mentored, encouraged and empowered to do things far beyond my own comfort zone – this Mackey Lecture is a perfect example! At every Marianist table I've sat at, I felt welcomed and experienced true dialogue. Opinions are not only asked for, but respected. Challenging voices are not silenced. In difficult conversations, there is a commitment to remain at the table.

INTRODUCTION TO MARIAN DIMENSION OF CHURCH

I first heard of the Marian dimension of Church from the writings of Fr. David Fleming, the past Superior General of the Society of Mary. In his Circular No. 7, he wrote:

Others in the Church may have greater gifts for authority and good order, or for stupendous individual feats in the service of the Gospel. For us, as for our Founder, the church is above all a family of disciples, gathered together, with respect for each one's gift and each one's needs, around the Mother of God. Our best realizations are invariably the result of teamwork and partnership with others. We tend to extend the gifts of equality and inclusiveness as far as possible. Like Mary, we emphasize the role of nurturing life, forming, affirming, and creating unity, much more than judging and condemning...

These words were a great A-HA! moment for me. It was the answer to my own personal struggles and clarified that something that the Marianist Family has to offer to the church and to the world.

But was this a solely a Marianist concept? Researching the Marian dimension of the church doesn't provide many answers, and there are different interpretations. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that:

Mary goes before us all in the holiness that is the Church's mystery as "the bride without spot or wrinkle." This is why the "Marian" dimension of the Church precedes the "Petrine." (773)

The origin of this statement is John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, "Mulieris Dignitatem, On the Dignity and Vocation of Women," written in 1988. It was the first apostolic letter

addressed specifically to women. I was curious to know the meaning behind the statement that the “Marian” dimension preceded the “Petrine.” Was it just a matter of chronology, or of importance?

EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN’S CONGRESS

In February 2008, the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities accepted an invitation from the Pontifical Council for the Laity to send a delegate to a Women’s Congress at the Vatican commemorating the 20th anniversary of *Mulieris Dignitatem*. I went representing the Marianist Family and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

I knew that the Congress would have a conservative flavor – after all, it was by invitation only. But I went with a firm belief in dialogue, not debate.

There is no time to go into the complexities of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, and I wish there was. I’m still struggling with its reasoning. [The only intelligent response I could think of while listening to all the highly educated presenters was “Yes. . . but . . . !” *Yes*, there is much beauty in the document. *But* there is much that challenges even moderate, feminist sensibilities. (omitted from lecture)]

The Marian dimension of church was mentioned several times throughout the Congress, and my ears would perk up. But it was not the Marian dimension of my A-HA moment.

Some used “Marian Dimension” synonymously with “Mary” as a way to promote Marian devotions and movements.

On the last day of the Congress, we had a private audience with Pope Benedict at the Vatican. Back in the Congress Hall, a cardinal enthusiastically proclaimed that we were blessed to have experienced both the Petrine Church in our papal visit of the morning, and the Marian Church present in the Women’s Congress. He identified the Marian dimension with the presence of women in the church.

WHAT IS THE MARIAN DIMENSION OF CHURCH?

What *is* the Marian dimension of Church? The concept is still being explored and I base my reflections on the present conversations within the Marianist Family. A conversation presented so well by Jack and Carol . . . so forgive me for the repetitions!

First of all, what the Marian dimension of Church is *not* . . .

It is *not* merely the promotion of Mary through Marian devotions and apparitions – as beneficial as these can be to our spiritual growth.

It is *not* a way of promoting the role of woman in the church and in the world, raising her on a pedestal of virtuous motherhood while neatly excluding her from leadership.

It is *not* solely about women in the church, creating a division between genders and vocational states.

The Marian dimension of Church is much greater than this.

- The Marian dimension of Church is about the call to holiness given to each and every one of us by virtue of our baptism – woman and man, lay and ordained.
- The Marian dimension points us to the Mary of Scripture, as both Carol and Jack have shown. She is a model of prayerful pondering and right, just, and compassionate action. She is mother and sister, seated with us at the table, praying with us and for us as we unite in her mission.
- The Marian dimension seeks to work with the Petrine dimension to humanize the rationality by fusing it with the emotional. To promote faith of the heart not only to balance faith of the mind, but to provide the compassionate impetus to incarnate our words into much-needed actions. In Carol's poetic words, to bring "more harmony through its holiness."
- The Marian dimension works with the inclusivity and communal dialogue of the Pauline dimension to help build a more participatory and less hierarchical church community.

CONCLUSION – HOW CAN WE PROMOTE THE MARIAN DIMENSION OF CHURCH?

How can we promote the Marian dimension of Church? Ghandi spoke the wonderful words, *be the change you want to see*.

This is a call to all in the church who want to see her grow in the qualities we've been describing as the Marian dimension of church, and I believe that it is a ripe moment in time to do so.

We need to nurture connections within the church. We need to be a voice at the table even – and especially when – the conversations are difficult. Our tools are not apologetics and debate. Our tools are respectful listening to better understand the wisdom of others (and discern that which is not wise). Our tools are inclusive dialogue that allows all voices to be heard. If we want to *see* this change, we must *be* this change.

Oh, and whatever happened to that pendulum that described my faith journey? It's swinging in the grey area between black and white, conservative and liberal. Often, it is a difficult area full of ambiguities and uncertainties. But it is an area that acknowledges that wisdom and truth can be found in both sides, and we need to have a foot in each. We need to be rooted in our Catholic tradition, while acknowledging that the Spirit often works in new and surprising ways!

Here in Hawai'i, the Marianist charism has been planted and nurtured by the Society of Mary for 125 years. It is lived in schools and parishes, and in the amazing growth of Marianist Lay Communities in recent years. Yesterday, we had a graced time with some local lay Marianists. What spirit-filled and inspiring women and men!

We have been given a glorious gift. We have been blessed with time to ponder, to learn, to embrace this gift and make it our own. We understand, I think, what the Marian dimension of church is because we have been trying to live it without naming it as such. Now is the time to gather our energy and courage to burst forth and share this gift with the church and with the world.