

**The Marianist Movement and the  
Challenge of Urban Justice and Reconciliation:  
An Interim Report on a Conversation**

**Bro. Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., Ph.D.  
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*This talk provides an interim report on a project relating to the Marianist Missionary Project to the contemporary challenge of advancing urban justice and reconciliation. Future drafts will provide more complete biographic information.*

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# **The Marianist Movement and the Challenge of Urban Justice and Reconciliation: An Interim Report on a Conversation**

## **I. Introduction**

I want to thank the Rector and the Rector's Council for the invitation to present a lecture which would explore a topic of interest to people involved with the Marianist charism and concerned with bringing our Marianist heritage into the future. During the last month when ideas for this talk were not coming together, I asked myself as I often do, "Why in God's name did I volunteer to give this talk?"

I then remembered advice given to me by Bro. John Totten, one of the wise persons in our Marianist tradition, when I asked him why he volunteered to give so many talks and workshops on the Marianist charism. He answered with his characteristic grin and slight laugh "It forces me to be clear about what I am thinking about our Marianist charism." I am not sure that I can meet John Totten's standards for clarity and insight, but I will give it my best shot and I will leave it up to you to judge whether my thinking was clear and/or insightful.

The topic for this talk occurred to me while I have been working as part of a Committee that is facilitating the strategic planning for the United States Province of the Society of Mary. Strategic planning for a religious community is not just an exercise in good analytical thinking about the future – it has to be this and much more. More importantly it is a time of conversation focused on what the Holy Spirit is calling our community to at this time of history. It is not only a human conversation but for responsive listening to the Holy Spirit – just as Mary did when the angel told her that she was to be the Mother of God – our strategic planning has to be a response to a call from the Holy Spirit.

In the Province at the present moment we are engaged in many dialogue sessions and I believe we are surfacing some very real fears that we have about the future of our Marianist Province as well as some exciting possibilities that we see for the future. Of course I am the "perpetual worrier" on the Province committee – "Lots of dialogue is great and I am all for it – but how are we going to summarize all of the rich and frankly somewhat chaotic and contradictory strands of this dialogue into an exciting vision statement for the Province?"

As I have been listening to these conversations, it is becoming clearer to me that the impact that the Society of Mary, Province of the United States, would like to have on the church and the larger society should come through the Marianist Movement. So what I would like to do in this talk is to focus a conversation on a strategic vision and some strategic options for the Marianist Movement in the United States for the year 2020. I realize that 2020 sounds pretty far away – but I remind you that it is only 11 years from now.

In focusing this conversation I will be trying a thought experiment – I will be using the term Marianist Movement for what is normally called the Marianist

Family. I am doing this for two reasons: 1) As I will explain later, I believe looking at the lay and religious communities in the Catholic and Marianist Tradition as a social movement is closer to what our founders envisioned and 2) I believe it can help the Marianist Province of the United States respond to the call of the Holy Spirit that is coming through our strategic planning conversations.

I will do this in three steps. First, I will consider Blessed Chaminade's role in initiating the Marianist Movement as well as focusing on the work of Fr. William Ferree, S.M., as a major American interpreter of Blessed Chaminade's work and its importance for the church. Out of this brief review I hope to suggest several guidelines that can help us discern the future of the Marianist Movement as we enter the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the second step, I will apply these guidelines by discerning some signs of the times that should be considered as we ponder the future of the Marianist Movement. In the third step, I will reflect on a vision for the Marianist Movement in 2020 and explore a plausible story of how that vision might be realized.

Given the shortness of the time we have tonight, we need to recognize some limitations in this exploration. First, I am focusing a conversation by laying out some of the key questions and giving some very preliminary questions and answers to these questions. I know many others have contributions to make to both clarifying the questions and in responding to them. Please take this talk as an invitation to continue the conversation.

Second, I am restricting myself to the reflections on the Marianist Movement in the United States. This is the part of the Marianist Movement that I know best. Yet as I formulated questions and explored answers, I realized that there is a lot that I don't know about the Marianist Movement in the context of the United States. I expect there will be corrections and modifications to my reflections.

Third, I am going to focus on advancing justice and reconciliation in the urban communities of the United States. Again, I do this because this is what I know best and it provides a good context in which to test some of the elements of the strategic vision. I believe the comments I will make on addressing urban poverty and violence have international application, but that will have to wait for a later conversation.

When I am working at my best, I believe that I am a reflective practitioner. Having the great experience of being president of UD, I now find myself deeply involved in advancing justice and reconciliation in the greater Dayton community. Organizing for high quality Catholic and public education in our urban neighborhoods, working for neighborhood transformation, working for minority economic development, and being an advocate for regional collaboration are some of the projects that demand my time and attention.

These projects are a source of immense learning for me. One of my Marianist religious friends once asked me, "Why do you keep teaching?" My response is "Teaching forces me to reflect on my experience and then engage learners in projects that help them learn the skills of advancing urban justice and

reconciliation.” The discipline of reading, of integrating ideas, and the reflection on experience that it takes to be a reasonably good teacher helps me make sure that my practice of advancing urban justice and reconciliation is truthful and working toward the common good.

## **II. The History of the Marianist Movement and What We Can Learn From It**

### **A. Why Use the Marianist Movement?**

One way to view the Marianist Family is to see it as an emergent social and ecclesial movement founded during the French Revolution by Blessed William Joseph Chaminade with the assistance of Venerable Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon and Venerable Marie Thérèse de Lamourous and a number of other courageous pioneers<sup>1</sup>. For a sociologist or political theorist, a social movement is a loosely organized effort on the part of a significantly large network of people and groups to change the existing social order in a manner that the participants of the social movement believe is beneficial to the large society. We can use the women’s suffrage movement and the civil rights movement as recently contemporary examples of social movements.

In the Women’s Suffrage Movement, for example, there was a set of beliefs and assumptions that women deserved to be treated with equal dignity and given the same rights as men to participate in and be represented in governance of the country. It also included the belief that our country would be a better country if

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<sup>1</sup> In this talk I will focus on Blessed Chaminade’s role in the origins of the Marianist Movement. Sr. Laura Leming, FMI, PhD, provided the following helpful note on the women founders of the Marianist Movement.

It is important to note that the women founders of the Marianist family helped to shape Fr. Chaminade’s sensibilities to some of the local “signs of the times” and critical human needs that the growing Marianist family could respond to. As a close friend of Chaminade, Marie Thérèse’s call to serve the needs of prostitutes in Bordeaux was something he witnessed first hand. Having asked him to accompany her on her visit to the Misericorde, he must have been surprised when she decided right then that she would stay and live in community with the women there. From that decision grew collaboration between the Bordeaux Sodality and the residents of the Misericorde.

Chaminade made the acquaintance of Adèle de Trenquelléon, after a member of the Bordeaux Sodality learned of the Association she had formed in the countryside. Adèle was only about 20 years old but she also had experienced exile as a young child. When her family was able to return, many of the families of the countryside where she lived were suffering from poverty and a lack of education. Adèle ran an informal “school” from her family’s home where children would come to learn the basics of reading, writing and religion. Adèle brought all these experiences to the table when her association became formally united with the Bordeaux Sodality, effectively spreading its influence beyond the city and sensitizing Chaminade to the needs of the rural poor.

The unusual collaboration that these three people formed across what might have been barriers of gender, age and hierarchical status is one of the unique gifts that the Marianist Movement continues to bring to the church today.

women had the right to vote. This movement had charismatic leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as well as a wide leadership network of women and male allies who were able to bring their message to the right public forums where their message could be heard and debated. The movement was able to mobilize resources so their leaders of the movement could devote full-time to promoting the many conversations that would be needed to clarify the vision of the movement and to mobilize the resources and people to realize this vision. The movement was pluralistic; it was able to include a diversity of opinions on how to realize the vision and it was able to creatively work through many conflicts.

The purpose of this talk is to stimulate or focus the conversation on the question “Can the Marianist Movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have an impact on advancing justice and reconciliation of the magnitude that the women’s suffrage movement and the civil rights movement had in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?” I am convinced that the answer is yes – but we have many difficult questions to answer and much hard work to do. So throughout this talk I will use the lens of social movements to explore the Marianist Family as the Marianist Movement.

## **B. Blessed Chaminade and the Founding of the Marianist Movement**

As I indicated in the introduction I want to explore how Blessed Fr. Chaminade founded the Marianist Movement and see if we can uncover some guidelines that will be helpful for us to discern the future.

### **Origins of the Marianist Movement**

Before the start of the French Revolution Father Chaminade was the business manager and a member of the administrative team running the successful St. Charles Seminary in Mussidan located in southwestern France. As a young man he had a modest theological education, was making progress in the spiritual life under the direction of his older brother, John Baptiste, and was deeply loyal to the Roman Catholic Church. While he was most likely aware of the major problems of the church in France and of French society, he and his colleagues were working to educate priest of piety and knowledge that would strengthen the Catholic faith in southwestern France.

The chaos of the French Revolution disrupted the serenity of St. Charles and began a journey for Chaminade that brought about major changes in the way he thought about his vocation. Chaminade participated in the development of the *cahier of doléances* for his region of Perigord that was to contribute to the agenda for the Estate General that began on May 5, 1789. At this point in his life Chaminade saw the monarchy as important for the future of the church in France, yet his behavior demonstrates that his sympathy was with the lower clergy, the common people, and for reform in the church.

For the nine years of the Revolution, Chaminade, like all French citizens, was caught up in the chaotic events of these times. Policies of the revolutionary

government brought about the closing of St. Charles Seminary and forced him to move to Bordeaux and begin a concealed priestly ministry. He had to face actions of the Revolutionary government with discernment, integrity and faith; he did not accept the Civil Constitution of the Clergy but remained faithful to the pope. Even in the midst of executions of clergy and faithful and in spite of many clergy leaving the country he continued to risk his life to service the faithful Catholics of Bordeaux.

As Chaminade experienced the events of the revolution, he was constantly probing them in the light of faith and endeavoring to understand how the church was being affected. In the midst of this rapidly changing situation, he discerned how he could minister to and strengthen those who remained faithful to the Catholic faith. In the contorted staggering of the revolutionary government, he could sometimes afford to be more visible in his ministry, but then just as quickly he had to change his approach to that of concealment and disguise. In this way he was able to provide the sacraments and words of faith and courage. He met many who were strong in their faith. Often sympathizers of the revolution disrupted his ministry and caused him to move into hiding. Chaos was everywhere and he had to adapt quickly to the unfolding event of the Revolution. Throughout this experience Chaminade developed a deeper sense of how many of the ideas and cultural practices of the Revolution were tearing apart both French society and the French church.

Through bureaucratic mistakes of the revolutionary government, Chaminade was forced to accept exile to Saragossa, Spain. In Saragossa there was a peace and tranquility and yet a strangeness. In this community, priests were accepted and honored, yet as émigrés from France they were not able to participate in the active ministry of the church. The three years of exile in Saragossa gave Chaminade the opportunity to reflect on the last nine years and to read or interpret what happened to him, his many friends and associates as well as the nation of France and the Catholic Church within that nation. While we only have a few stories about what happened during the time of exile we can conjecture from his later actions and writings some of the topics that might have been central to his reflections.

The changes of the revolution happened much faster than anyone expected. Reflecting on the nine years of the Revolution, Chaminade could see the deep alienation between classes within French society and the inability of political and social structures to support the changing economy of France. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, as well as the nobles and many of the archbishops and bishops, lived extravagant lifestyles and were exempt from paying a fair portion of taxes. The lower class people and clergy were living in very poor conditions, subjected to heavy taxation, and often treated poorly by the nobles. The emerging merchant class experienced a heavy tax burden.

Also, there were deep divisions within the Catholic Church. The King of France appointed archbishops and bishops and while the pope had veto power over these appointments, it was hardly exercised. Many of the archbishops and bishops were younger sons of noblemen and needless to say often provided less

than exemplar leadership for the church. The lower class clergy were not often well educated and were clearly looked down upon by the higher class clergy. The revolution brought about a split between those who were loyal to the Catholic Church under the leadership of the pope in Rome and those who sided with the revolutionary government and wanting the church of France to be independent of Rome. In Saragossa, Chaminade pondered these realities and searched for ways to create healing and reconciliation within French society and the church.

There was an alienation of many people from the Catholic faith. The institutional structures and practices of the church that supported faith had been eroded by the onslaught of ideas from the anti-Catholic French Enlightenment and by the laxity of practice among many of the clergy, religious and laity. The revolution created a decade in which most people were not catechized and were without the ritual practices of the church. There was a whole generation in France ignorant of the Christian faith and unable to pass on to the next generation the knowledge and practice of faith. There was a need to address the religious indifference of a large number and to address the lack of knowledge of the faith for those who were nominally Catholic. If the church was to be rebuilt in France, then a new way to evangelize had to be found.

### **The Marianist Missionary Project**

During his time at Saragossa reflecting and praying at the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar, Chaminade received an inspiration on a new way to rebuild the Church in France – a new missionary project. We are familiar with his search for a new fulcrum and a new lever to bring about transformation – new times demand new methods. I would like to briefly sketch the missionary project that Blessed Chaminade undertook in his return to Bordeaux.

Chaminade chose to seek the title *Missionary Apostolic* when he returned to Bordeaux so that he would have an important latitude in the task of rebuilding the church in France. He would seek to rebuild the church through multiplication of faith communities that would support the practice of Christianity – his new missionary project for the Marianist Movement. Many of you in the room are familiar with the elements of this missionary project – the Marianist charism, the spirituality of the Marianist Movement, and the method of organizing characteristics of the Marianist Movement.

**The Marianist Charism:** In talking about the Marianist charism, I want to distinguish between two terms – charism – a theological term and – charisma – a sociological term. A charism is a gift or a grace of the Holy Spirit given for building up the church that is manifest through or incarnated in persons or groups. So the Marianist charism is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the church through the Marianist Movement. The Marianist charism is manifested in the work of Blessed Chaminade and the other founders of the Marianist Movement. Charisma, in sense used by the sociologist Max Weber, is the power or authority that a person has to hold and direct our attention. Blessed Chaminade may not have been charismatic in the sense of our new President Barack Obama, but he

exercised what I like to call a gentle charisma in that he had credibility and could direct and sustain people's attention. I will use the distinction between charism and charisma later in the talk.

I believe the main challenge Blessed Chaminade presented to those he invited into the Marianist Movement was "To be disciples of Jesus Christ, Son of God, become Son of Mary for the salvation of the world." This is the core of the Marianist charism or grace given the Marianist Movement for the good of the Church:

- Jesus, the Son of God – the Word of God come to earth to bring forth the Good News of the Kingdom of God.
- Jesus, Son of Mary – Central to the Marianist charism is the recognition of Mary's call and her mission to incarnate the Word of God and the Good News of the Kingdom into a particular time in history. It also recognized that we are to be formed by Mary as she formed Christ.

Modifying an expression of Tom Giardino, we can say that the core of the Marianist charism is the experience of being a disciple of Jesus – following Jesus by being **called** by God, **formed** by Mary and **sent** on the mission to embody the Good News of the Kingdom of God in one's time and place.

**Marianist Spirituality:** Building on the work of the French school of spirituality, Blessed Chaminade realized that he had to develop a distinctive spirituality: a set of principles, guidelines and methods that could be used to become a disciple of Jesus, Son of God become Son of Mary for the salvation of the world. Some elements of spirituality that Chaminade believed were important were the following:

- Importance of presence – We demonstrate the depth of our discipleship by the quality of our presence in the midst of relationships. Our presence is shaped by our interior life – by the depth of how we have put on the person of Christ.
- Growing in discipleship requires putting off the Old Self – our false self and taking on the New Self or the self of Christ.
- Developing a spiritual life takes some leisure in our life and it takes lots of patience.
- Growth in discipleship is collaborative. Growth is initiated by God but it takes our human agency and commitment. Growth is realized in solitude but also in the friendships of fellow disciples.

**Chaminade's Method of Organizing the Marianist Movement:** Blessed Chaminade not only developed a spiritual discipline but he knew that this spirituality had to manifest itself in new modes of action – a method of organizing the Marianist Movement. Chaminade believed that milieu or the

informal social environment that had arisen in France through the revolution did not support and in fact undermined the practice of Christianity. The combination of the anti-religious orientation of many philosophies and the persecution by the revolutionary government left Christianity in a devastated situation.

In order to overcome this prevailing milieu he believed that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, would have a major role in overcoming this heresy. Her mission is to bring the message of Christ – the Kingdom of God – into the world in this time and place of history. Mary inspired him with a new missionary project. As I have reconstructed Saragossa in my own mind – I see Chaminade realizing that he had a new vocation – to take on this missionary project for Mary.

In this missionary project he wanted to recreate the fervor of the first Christian communities in which all were seeking to be disciples of Jesus in the fullest sense. As Pope John Paul II said at Blessed Chaminade's beatification, Chaminade was an apostle of the laity. This missionary project involved building an alternative milieu – i.e., communities that would support and challenge its members to full discipleship – a discipleship in which they would grow in faith and then connect that faith to action for change in the world.

He adapted an approach that had been used before in the church, i.e., the formation of sodality communities. These new sodality communities were to be communities of faith that would show that the Christianity of the early church, the church of the Acts of the Apostles, could be realized in contemporary France. These would not be communities of social and intellectual elites but would be a network of communities that were organized to unite groups from many different sectors of society.

He began the formation of these communities through a series of one-on-one conversations with young men who gathered for his celebration of the Eucharist. Once he determined that a number of these young men were interested in a more intense faith life and helping others to grow in their faith, he gathered them into a common conversation which led to the first sodality communities. He continued using this method of organizing as he formed a wide network of sodality communities.

These sodality communities were to have the following organizational characteristics:

- The communities of the Marianist Movement were to be attractive communities – they needed to embody the Word of God in a way that was inviting and attractive to others.
- The communities of the Marianist Movement worked on faith formation. Chaminade knew that these communities were to embody the Word of God and to bring forth God's kingdom, and it was important to have a solid grounding in the Christian faith. All were concerned in growing in their faith; those who knew more helped those who knew less. Blessed Chaminade did not assume a deep faith – he created communities that could catechize its members.

- The communities of the Marianist Movement came together regularly to have constructive and critical conversations on important issues of each community's life.
- The communities of the Marianist Movement organized themselves in an effective and efficient manner. Roles and responsibilities of leadership were explicitly developed. Processes were set up for coordination and communication. A number of people dedicated themselves to providing leadership for the emerging Marianist Movement.
- The communities of the Marianist Movement were oriented to mission – that is to multiply relationships and communities that support the Christian practice of faith and gospel service and that help other persons to flourish in a more human manner.

**Manifestations of the Marianist Charism:** As people like Dave Fleming and Tom Giardino have studied this early phase of the Marianist Movement, they have identified five manifestations of the Marianist charism. Some people like to call them the five pillars of the Marianist charism.

- Formation in **Faith** – Blessed Chaminade insisted that to be true apostles we must know our faith – not just intellectually, but with our heart. To be passionate about Christianity we need faith in the heart. The Creed as a summary of Christian belief was at the center of the catechetical effort.
- **Communities** of support and challenge are essential for developing and sustaining discipleship.
- In Relationship with **Mary** – We collaborate with Mary in her mission of bringing Christ into our world and we ask her to form us as she did Jesus.
- For the Sake of **Mission** – We have a mission bringing the Good News of God's kingdom to the world. We seek to multiply apostolic persons and communities that work to advance justice and reconciliation.
- Some people like to use inclusivity as the fifth manifestation to capture Blessed Chaminade's desire to include in the Marianist movement the diverse talents and gifts of all people. I prefer to use **Creating Unity in the Midst of Diversity**. I believe Blessed Chaminade was talking about the unity or the love that create unity among differences.

Finally, let me make a comment about Blessed Chaminade as a leader. The charisma that Blessed Chaminade showed as a leader was that of being an adaptive leader. To use Ron Heifetz's phrase, he could get "to the balcony – away from the dance floor" so he could see the emerging patterns. He could engage people in constructive and critical conversation and keep them focused on the critical task of rebuilding the Church. He was always challenging his collaborators and provided them opportunities to take responsibility for the missionary project.

My final comment about Blessed Chaminade is that he was one of the instruments in the hands of the spirit that brought to the church the gift of the Marianist charism, and he exercised charisma in his ability to hold and direct the attention of the early Marianist Movement.

## **C. Father Ferree and Revisioning the Marianist Movement**

### **Fr. Ferree's Contribution**

I have spent a great deal of time on Blessed Chaminade because I want to make historical comparisons to other times in the life of the Marianist Movement. I am now going to skip over a large amount of history on the Marianist Movement. I would recommend Larry Cada's *Short History of Marianist Spirituality*, Joe Lackner's *William Joseph Chaminade, His Apostolic Intent and His Experience with Schools, Instruction, and Education: A Historical Portrait* and Eduardo Benlloch's *Chaminade's Message Today* to fill in the large gaps that I have left out. These studies are available from the North American Center for Marianist Studies.

Since in this talk I want to focus on the Marianist Movement and the challenge of advancing justice and reconciliation, I want to devote some time to Fr. William Ferree's insights into Blessed Chaminade and the Marianist Movement. Fr. Ferree was a Marianist scholar, teacher, administrator and social innovator. He was elected to the General Council, served as president of Chaminade University and provincial of the former Province of Cincinnati.

He was convinced of and committed to the vision and charism of Blessed Chaminade. He was constantly in dialogue with contemporary trends in the church and the world to relate the bold insights of Chaminade to the challenges facing the church and the world. Benjamin Dougherty has prepared for the North American Center for Marianist Studies an outstanding resources collection on Fr. Ferree's work. It contains a very thoughtful tutorial on Fr. Ferree by Larry Cada and many original Ferree documents. It is a wonderful resource and I highly recommend it to your study.

Father Ferree had a great impact on Marianist appreciation of Father Chaminade during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. He was constantly in the process of constructing synthesis of Fr. Chaminade's thought and plan of action. There is much to be gained in understanding the Marianist Movement in studying Fr. Ferree's first and second synthesis of Chaminade's thought. If you would ask Fr. Ferree what the organizing insights or pillars of the Marianist Movement are he would have indicated:

- **Universality:** Capturing Blessed Chaminade's idea that our mission is universal; the Marianist Movement remains open to the call of Providence.
- **Intensity:** Capturing Blessed Chaminade's idea that aligned and focused effort are stronger and more powerful.

- **Multiplication:** Capturing Blessed Chaminade’s idea that rebuilding of the church and society is done by multiplying apostles and apostolic communities.
- **Self-effacement:** Capturing Blessed Chaminade’s idea that the Marianist Movement views itself with realism – always working in the background as a quiet and modest force. Members of the Movement practice dying to self so that Christ may be manifested in their lives.
- **Spirit of Faith:** Capturing Blessed Chaminade’s idea that Marianist Movement is a movement of faith and that it strives to renew or rekindle on all sides the divine torch of faith.

As a scholar, Fr. Ferree combined this study of Fr. Chaminade’s thought with work on the Catholic social tradition resulting in what many believe was groundbreaking works on social justice. His exposition on social justice in Pius XI’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* highlighted the important role that social structures, i.e., the patterned network of institutions, organizations and associations, have in supporting the common good of society. In simple terms, Ferree defined the act of social justice as organizing people to change or transform social structures so that they support a better realization of the common good.

The act of social justice – act proper to the virtue – is organizing for social change that creates a social system where all people have greater opportunities to flourish as human persons. Ferree’s contributions to a theory of social justice have been positively recognized by scholars like Byron Hehir and Michael Novak – a wide spectrum of Catholic thinkers. Ferree also begins to develop charity, prudence, temperance and courage as social virtues – how these virtues were to be exercised by groups and organizations.

As he was studying in the Marianist seminary in Fribourg, Switzerland, he took the opportunity to get involved with the movements of Catholic Action that were taking place in Europe. He helped the American bishops articulate their approach to developing Catholic Action in the United States. When he served in the General Administration in Rome he continued his work with major lay movements and served as a consultant to the Vatican Council on the role of the laity in the church. He helped formulate some of the key ideas on the vocation of the laity that emerged from Vatican Council II.

### **Some Lessons from Fr. Ferree**

In my judgment, Fr. Ferree has thoughtfully demonstrated the following propositions about the Marianist Movement:

- Blessed Chaminade has anticipated the emergence of the lay vocation in the Church – a vocation that is to take a greater responsibility for ministry

in the church and for ministry to society by bringing in the Good News of the Kingdom of God in dialogue with culture and society.

- Blessed Chaminade's method of organizing a variety of communities of faith anticipated the movement of Catholic Action as it evolved in the church of Europe and the United States. The Marianist Movement should pay attention and learn from the Catholic Action movement.
- Blessed Chaminade's insight into the task of transforming the social milieu was greatly enhanced by Fr. Ferree's insights into the theory and practice of social justice and the role social structures play in promoting the common good. Ferree insisted that communities of the Marianist Movement work to organize people for social change in society so there can be a greater realization of justice in society.
- Fr. Ferree believed Blessed Chaminade's insistence on a universal mission for the Marianist Movement to bring the Good News of the Kingdom of God was not a fantasy but something that could be realized. Universality was possible if we recognize the movements for human development that are emerging around the world. The Marianist Movement, while keeping its distinctive identity, can aspire to a universal mission if it is willing to form partnerships with other groups and organizations interested in human development that would work to promote social transformation for the common good.
- As Larry Cada has indicated, Fr. Ferree was a systems thinker and an excellent student of the management revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. Fr. Ferree believed that Blessed Chaminade gave the Marianist Movement a powerful method of organizing. He also believed that the Marianist Movement could both learn and contribute to a modern management and development theory.

The genius of Fr. Ferree for the Marianist Movement was not so much his ability to synthesize a comprehensive theory for the Marianist Movement, but his insistence that the Movement must be in dialogue with the major social and intellectual trends of the church and society. He developed a great intellectual curiosity for the thought of Blessed Chaminade and the Marianist charism and he brought these gifts into reciprocal and critical dialogue with society and culture.

#### **D. Moving into the Future**

How should the Marianist Movement proceed into the future? The first line of Peter Stienfel's *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* reads, "Today the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is on the verge of either an irreversible decline or a thoroughgoing transformation." I believe the same statement can be made about the Marianist Movement in the United States. If we in the Marianist Movement are to undergo a thoroughgoing transformation then we, in my judgment, are going to have to do things quite differently than we are doing them presently. I have spent time examining

Blessed Chaminade's and Fr. Ferree's contribution to the Marianist Movement because they suggest some questions that are helpful in discerning the future of the Marianist Movement. Among these questions are:

- How does the charism of the Marianist Movement help read the signs of the times?
  - What is the importance of formation of faith in the church today?
  - Does the Marianist missionary project have relevance for the new challenges facing the church today?
  - Can the Marianist missionary project shed light on the responsibility for lay leadership in the church?
- How can we enrich the Marianist charism and the Marianist Movement through dialogue with important spiritual and intellectual movements within the church and the world?
  - How can we enrich the Marianist Movement from insights of contemporary Catholic social tradition?
  - What do new lay movements within the church have to tell us about how we might adapt the Marianist Movement?
- How can we pass on the commitment and responsibility for the Marianist Movement to the next generation?

We will use these questions as we explore the future of the Marianist Movement in the next section of this talk.

### **III. Reading Some of the Signs of the Times**

In thinking about the future of the Marianist Movement I believe we must pay attention to several important issues in the church and in society. I would like to briefly examine some of these issues.

#### **Addressing Urban Injustice**

While there are many issues we could consider within American society, I will call just one to our attention, the issue of urban poverty and violence. I believe that this is the most critical issue of justice in the United States.

To understand this issue in its full depth it takes great deal of time. But I will provide a short overview of the argument in three points. The patterns of urban development over the last 60 years since the close of World War II have been characterized by urban sprawl, i.e., the growth of urbanized land at a faster rate than the growth of the urban population. This pattern of urban growth has had many causes, including federal urban policies, but basically it has been the movement of those people and families with sufficient income to make choices in their housing. My first point is that this pattern of urban sprawl has led to a high concentration of poverty and minorities in the center city.

My second point is that the high concentration of poverty in the center city neighborhoods has had serious negative consequences for children and families. In high poverty neighborhoods we see patterns of unemployment, a high concentration of female headed households, and a high percentage of school dropouts. High poverty neighborhoods are poorer in physical and mental health and there is an increase in criminal activity and violence.

Over time the deterioration of the neighborhood and the lack of viable markets cause businesses to move out of the neighborhood and there is an increase in the cost of basic household goods. In the high poverty neighborhoods of Dayton, students entering kindergarten are three times more likely to need intensive intervention to start them on the path of learning than students in the more highly affluent suburbs. On a national basis, students in high poverty neighborhoods are 26 times more likely to drop out of school than their peers in highly affluent suburbs. Teenage pregnancy is one of the predictors of children being raised in poverty.

Again, on a national basis, young teenage women being raised in poverty are 160 times more likely to give birth as a teenager than their peers in highly affluent suburbs. Violence is endemic in high poverty neighborhoods. Domestic violence is highly correlated with the poverty of the neighborhood. Again, violence for children is disastrous. Again on a national level, a child in a high poverty neighborhood is 18 times more likely to be killed by a gun than their peers in highly affluent neighborhoods. In high poverty neighborhoods, children are 60 times more likely to suffer reportable abuse or neglect and 43 times more likely to be in foster care than their peers in highly affluent suburbs. So clearly we have an issue of injustice of monumental proportions.

My third point is that this injustice of urban poverty cannot be addressed by working only in urban neighborhoods. To advance urban justice in David Rusk's words requires both an "inside game" and an "outside game." The inside game requires an effort to build neighborhoods through comprehensive initiatives that rebuild not only the infrastructure of neighborhoods but the social fabric of a community that promotes human flourishing, especially the flourishing of families and children.

The outside game involves intensive and collaborative work to transform the economy and rebuild the human resources base that can support the new economy. The outside game involves regional efforts to implement smart patterns of land usage, to plan for the effective repair and expansion of infrastructure and to mobilize resources on a regional basis for the good of the whole region.

The point I will be making is not that the Marianist Movement by itself can address the pattern of urban injustice, but that it can be one of the important catalysts in mobilizing citizens, neighborhoods, faith communities, businesses, school systems, not-for-profit organizations and multiple levels of government to advance urban justice and reconciliation.

## **Some Trends in the Church**

If the Marianist Movement is to address urban justice and reconciliation, then I believe that there are five developments within the church that would require our thoughtful reflection and response. The first is the issue of lay leadership in the Catholic Church. Both Blessed Chaminade and Fr. Ferree emphasized the importance of the lay vocation within the church and for the vitality of Christianity.

In the American church the aging of the clergy and religious has made this issue even more critical for the future of the church in America. It seems that Rome is emphasizing the tradition of hierarchical and clerical leadership for the church. The financial crisis being faced by the American church, triggered by the sexual abuse scandal, has forced the church leadership to cut back on many positions in lay ecclesial ministry. What can the Marianist Movement contribute to the need for an expansion of lay leadership within the church? In view of the challenge for advancing urban justice and reconciliation, what can we do to prepare our members, our communities and our sponsored institutions for this challenge?

The second important issue within the church is the emergence of lay ecclesial movements. Starting after World War II and intensifying after Vatican Council II has been growth of lay ecclesial movements and communities, such as Communion and Liberation, the Focolare Movement, and the Community of Sant' Egidio. These communities have attracted some vigorous lay vocations, developed intense programs of formation and schools of holiness, and undertaken important tasks in and for the church. These tasks include dialogue within the church, across religions, and with culture as well as the task of peace-building and reconciliation in places of extreme violence. These lay ecclesial communities have been able to marshal resources to advance these important projects of the church.

Blessed Chaminade adapted the older sodality movement to the needs of restoring Christianity in France and Fr. Ferree demonstrated how the methods of Catholic Action could help the communities of the Marianist Movement address issues of justice. We in the Marianist Movement need to ask ourselves if there is something we can learn from the Lay Ecclesial Movements and Communities that can help us to be a catalyst for advancing urban justice and reconciliation.

The third important issue within the church is the development of the ecclesiology of communion. The ecclesiology of communion views the church as a community of communities united as the Body of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. While the magisterium and the authority of the bishops and the pope are important sources of unity in communion ecclesiology, there are important relations of trust, collaboration and learning together among the communities that make up the church. The church in American cities has developed with a geographical parish model and in many cases with ethnic parishes within ethnic neighborhoods. As the church and the Marianist Movement address justice in our urban communities, an ecclesiology will be a theological resource. How can the

Marianist Movement be an important resource for mobilizing the church community for addressing justice and reconciliation in our urban communities?

The fourth important issue in the church is the development of the virtue of solidarity. While the virtue of solidarity has a history before John Paul II, it was he who indicated that solidarity is a deep commitment to work toward the common good in society. It is a virtue that is rooted in the generative love modeled in the Trinity and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In his address to the Bishops of the Americas, John Paul II indicates that at the basis of a spirituality of solidarity is a deep experience of Jesus as the Word of God in the prayer and the practices of the church.

This experience of Jesus leads to conversion – to a deep transformation of the horizons of our heart and mind by posing challenging questions which give us new ways of looking at the world. This conversion leads to communion – to a deeper love for all our brothers and sisters and to extend this love to the stranger, especially those who suffer and exist at the margins of society. Communion leads to solidarity which is the commitment to the common good through service and the work of social justice. How can John Paul II's spirituality help us put a new light on our own Marianist spirituality – on the practice of the virtues for putting on Christ and engaging in the work of social justice so that we can be a catalyst for urban change?

The fifth important issue within the church is the religious formation of young people. It is clear that a good number of young people in our church today have a desire to deepen their Catholic faith – they have shown a deepened interest in Catholic piety and practices. Yet many people believe that the church has not done a good job of presenting the foundations of our faith to young people. Just as Father Chaminade insisted that formation in faith be clearly rooted in an understanding of the Creed, we must find creative ways for our young people to develop a fuller appreciation of Catholic doctrine.

We must find a way to present the faith today that resists an overly cognitive approach to church doctrine but is a robust presentation of the dynamic and developing doctrinal heritage of the church. Our sharing of church doctrine and our faith must be historically conscious and must occur within the larger cultivation of the religious imagination. If we are going to develop persons within the Marianist Movement who can lead and sustain the fight for urban justice over the long haul, we must have people deeply rooted in their faith.

#### **IV. Imagining a Future of the Marianist Movement.**

In the previous section of the paper, we have reviewed some of the signs of the times that might shape the future of the Marianist Movement. In this section of the paper we engage in a two-part thought experiment: 1) We describe the Marianist Movement as we would desire it to be in 2020 (the vision) and 2) We describe a partial scenario of how the vision might be realized in a particular setting. Again it should be remembered what is presented below is a contribution

to a constructive and critical conversation of the future of the Marianist Movement.

### **The Vision – The Marianist Movement in 2020**

In 2020 the Marianist Movement will be composed of a network of diverse Marianist lay communities, smaller yet vibrant communities of religious, the Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary, affiliates of the religious communities, and a large number of deeply committed lay persons who are partners in our Marianist-sponsored apostolic institutions and projects. At the center of the Marianist Movement in the United States is a vibrant network of persons and apostolic faith communities animated by the Marianist charism of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade and the founders of the Marianist Movement.

In the major cities where it is located, the Marianist Movement will be known as a dynamic animator and partner in the renewal of the local church and for its innovative commitment and perseverance to working at urban justice and reconciliation. The communities of the Marianist Movement will sponsor a dynamic network of apostolic institutions, projects and communities that advance justice and reconciliation and give special preference to the poor and to the education of youth.

The lay communities of the Marianist Movement will have developed a program of formation and socialization that are similar to but distinct from those developed by the religious communities of the Movement. In the initial formation program young people who have been invited into the lay branches of the Movement would develop an appreciation of the Marianist charism and missionary project and also have opportunities to deepen their own faith.

After this period of initial formation these lay members will make a commitment or promise to the Marianist Missionary project that will be renewed annually. There will also be a dynamic and flexible program of ongoing formation for those who have been with the Movement for some period of time. These programs would be directed toward deepening the members' appreciation of the Marianist charism and missionary project and how both can be adapted to contemporary American society.

### **A Plausible Scenario**

Is it possible to realize this vision of the Marianist Movement by 2020? The way that we can test the plausibility of this vision is to assume that the vision outlined above has been realized and then see if there is a realistic scenario that can be developed that can lead to the vision. Below we will build this scenario in an urban area called CITY and we will assume that there is a Marianist-sponsored university and secondary school in the place called CITY.

The dynamic growth of the Marianist Movement in CITY that took place in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was stimulated by many factors. The first

factor is the growth of young people interested in the Marianist Movement. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a large number of young people were initiated into the Marianist Movement through a program of initial formation on the three campuses of Marianist-sponsored universities. It took awhile, but slowly this new group of young members of the Marianist Movement began to organize themselves into several place-based communities and virtual communities with a clear mission and with a focused apostolic task.

This coalescing into communities was promoted when an older generation of leaders in both the Marianist lay communities and the Marianist religious communities took seriously the formation of this new cadre of young members of the Movement. They assisted these younger members by providing accompaniment in their spiritual journey, by ongoing formation in Marianist spirituality and the Marianist apostolic method, and strategic conversations on how and where to organize new lay communities. Growth was also enhanced when in 2011 the Marianist Movement developed an Annual Summer Renewal Program which featured opportunities for faith formation, reflection on trends in the church and society, and for celebration and prayer for all members of the Marianist Movement.

The second factor promoting growth of the Marianist Movement was growth of lay partners in Marianist-sponsored apostolic works. A number of faculty, staff, administrators and board members in the Marianist-sponsored university and high school in CITY began to take part in a nationwide partners program that prepared lay colleagues to be partners and collaborate with the Marianist religious communities in strengthening and adapting the Catholic and Marianist tradition to address a rapidly changing educational and economic environment. Partner teams at each of these institutions not only worked to strengthen the mission and identity of their institutions but also worked on getting students engaged in advancing justice and reconciliation in CITY as part of their learning.

A third exciting development was how the Marianist Movement coordinated and aligned their efforts in CITY to work at advancing urban justice and reconciliation. The Marianist-sponsored university had and has a great reputation for being involved in a major way in community building in urban neighborhoods that enhanced the flourishing of families and children in the neighborhoods.

One of the Marianist religious communities that was set up to invite young people to Marianist religious life and the larger Marianist Movement sent on a mission some of its members to establish a “mission” community in one of the poorer neighborhoods in which the university was involved. Working with the university, the religious community set up an adjacent house for students studying at the university who wanted a service internship in community building and in advancing urban justice and reconciliation.

Soon the religious and the students were not only eating and praying together but were working with the neighborhood leaders on the future of the neighborhood. Soon one of the younger Marianist lay communities that was

forming decided to join the religious and the students and develop their own community presence in the neighborhood. This Marianist lay community was unique in several ways.

First, while all of its members were in different jobs, such as working for nonprofit agencies, working for an advertising agency, being a graduate student, etc., they were committed to being part of a common mission of advancing justice and reconciliation in the neighborhood. A second way they were unique was in their commitment to simple living they turned over 20 percent of their paycheck to the community so that it would have resources to support their efforts. The two communities of the Movement, one lay and one religious, were able to organize service learning opportunities for students at the university and the local Marianist-sponsored high schools and help organize reflection sessions on these service learning experiences.

It soon became clear to the two Movement communities in the neighborhood that a community organizer was needed to assist the neighborhood with its projects. These two communities developed a proposal to the other communities of the Marianist Movement in the local community, both lay and religious, that they would support the community organizer and a project of community building called the Shalom project for a period of three years. Shortly after the organizer was hired the Marianist lay communities in CITY decided to expand the Shalom project into the Shalom Program which was a nonprofit foundation, fundraising, and coordinating agency for the Marianist lay community's task of advancing urban justice and reconciliation.

In its first years the Shalom Program was able to support the community organizer as an ongoing effort. Eventually the Shalom Program rented a closed Catholic school for \$100 a year with a promise to rehabilitate and maintain the building. Volunteers from the Marianist Movement from several nearby cities would join with volunteers from the neighborhood to renovate the school into the Shalom Community Center. After the work was completed on the weekends there would be a Eucharistic celebration and a dinner with the neighbors.

The Shalom Center became a hub which connected students and faculty from the Marianist-sponsored educational institutions to be partners with the neighbors. The Shalom Center ran programs that ranged from adult literacy and job preparation to wellness and parenting classes for young families. Working with the local dioceses the Center also became a place of innovative and creative evangelical outreach through programs of scripture study and faith formation. A number of ecumenical small faith communities were organized.

The Shalom Center and its animating force, the Marianist Movement, became known for a community building approach that engaged the neighbors and others in thinking about the future of the neighborhood, in solving problems, setting goals, and implementing change. This community building process helped the community create new norms, practices, and institutions that supported the flourishing of families and children.

This community building has a Marian style:

- It is dialogical
- It values relationship and helps build solidarity within the neighborhood
- It is inclusive
- It has a special voice for the poor and disadvantaged

Through the Marianist Movement in CITY the Shalom Center was able to connect to faith communities, especially Catholic parishes, in other neighborhoods and in the suburban communities. The Shalom Center and its mission of advancing justice and reconciliation in urban neighborhoods became one of the important focuses for the peace and justice outreach of the Catholic parishes in CITY.

One could continue to expand this little scenario but hopefully there is sufficient development to show the plausibility of the Marianist Movement being a network of persons, communities, and institutions that can effectively advance justice and reconciliation in urban neighborhoods.

## V. Conclusion

In this talk I have shared with you part of a project that I have been working on for the last several years, namely “How will the Marianist Movement in the United States become a vital force for addressing urban justice and reconciliation?” I have reviewed how Blessed Chaminade and his colleagues got the Marianist Movement started in post-revolutionary France and how this movement became a force for change within the church and within the French society.

I provided a glimpse of how Fr. Ferree showed how the Marianist Movement can be an important force in the church’s work of advancing social justice. I have provided a tentative and partial image of how the Marianist Movement can be a force for urban justice and reconciliation as we move into the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is much more to the project – but not for tonight. Hopefully I have been able to offer a picture of hope for the future of the Marianist Movement within the United States, and initiate a conversation about its future.