



## Preparatory Commission 2006 General Chapter Society of Mary

### COMMUNICATION #9

**To:** All Members of the Society of Mary  
**From:** The Preparatory Commission  
**Re:** Major Challenges and Actions for the Society of Mary  
**Date:** June 5, 2006

A little more than a year ago, the Preparatory Commission asked each of you to help us read the signs of the times so that the General Chapter of 2006 could set some clear goals for the future. We received approximately 135 responses from Councils, communities and individuals, which represented the thinking of almost 650 of our members. The Preparatory Commission summarized the responses and shared them with you in mid-October of last year. We noted among you a real desire to be involved in the work of the General Chapter and in setting some goals for the future.

From the wide variety of responses to the questionnaire, the Preparatory Commission felt a need to focus the issues more precisely. We synthesized the responses even more. In this summary, we indicated 12 **challenges** and 12 **actions**. In a second questionnaire, sent out in January of this year, we asked you to reflect once more on two questions:

1. What are the **most important** [name no more than three] **challenges** facing the Society of Mary in the next 5-10 years?
2. What **concrete actions** does the Society of Mary need to take to respond to those challenges?

Once again, the responses we received were thoughtful and manifested some serious and prayerful reflection. We are grateful for these careful responses from Councils, communities and individuals. This time the responses reflected the thinking of almost 400 of you. As soon as we are able, we hope to post all these responses on our website for your review.

At our meeting last month, the Preparatory Commission studied the responses in detail and narrowed the **challenges** and **actions** to five each. We prioritized them according to the frequency of times mentioned. Then we wrote a short summary for each **challenge** and for each **action**, utilizing, as much as possible, the written responses to the questionnaire. With this communication, the Preparatory Commission shares these results with you.

These **challenges** and **actions** are very large areas of concern. However, we hope they will prove useful to the Chapter delegates as they discern the path we need to take for the future. As you read and reflect on this summary, please feel free to share your further thoughts with any of the Chapter delegates.

As we celebrate this Marian feast today, let us ask Mary, Help of Christians, to live more deeply our alliance with her so as “to assist her in her mission of forming in faith a multitude of brothers for her first-born Son.” [*Rule of Life*, #6]

## **Challenge #1**

### ***The decrease of vocations and the aging of the religious***

The significant decrease in the number of Marianist religious and the continuing crisis in the recruitment of new members are both subjects of serious concern for the entire congregation.

In the 10 years since the General Chapter of 1996, the membership of the Society of Mary has decreased by 279 members. In the 5 years since 2001, she has lost 123 members. While each year the average of new professions is more or less 30 religious, the number of deceased approaches 40 and the number of those leaving the Society is in the neighborhood of 20 per year. In order to maintain our numbers at the current level and at the same time to compensate for the number of deceased, we would need sixty new professions each year. Since this number is difficult to reach all indications are that the numbers of our religious family could continue to diminish in the next 5-10 years unless a spectacular resurgence in new members comes to halt this decrease.

The consequence of the fact that such a relief in numbers is coming in very sparingly and of the fact of the aging of the members of the Society is that we are seeing the closing of communities and the suppression of some works. A general impression of decline now seems to predominate among the members of the Society of Mary. This is hardly an inspiring situation. The crisis reveals a deeper uneasiness. It is this uneasiness, which worries us and challenges us. Would we be, on one hand, responsible for this weakening and decline? Certain responses to the questionnaire are rather critical in this respect. On the other hand, others invite us to pull ourselves together by situating this crisis in its proper place: that is, in the more global context of society and of the Church. Consequently we are asked to act in such a way as to start getting back on our feet again.

Pope John Paul II used to compare this “persistent crisis in vocations” with the lowering of the intensity of faith and of the practice of the sacraments. Undoubtedly this parallel does not occur by chance because vocations are often a barometer of the religious vitality of a local church.

The third stage of the post-conciliar period, which we are currently experiencing, is marked by aging and a certain heaviness of spirit after the more enthusiastic phases at the end of the council and the crisis of the 70's. Given all of these facts, must we say that we are still today in a state of crisis? Or rather should we think that we are in the presence of an entirely new reality? It is this new realism which is causing us to become aware of the profound transformations in society and which call us at the same time to a profound transformation in our religious life and in our way of living that life? This profound transformation is not a simple return to the sources but rather it is the deep desire to enter into a new founding dynamism.

Let us not forget that becoming old is a fact of life - no one is exempt. To succeed in aging well is to accept the fact of committing ourselves to a process of becoming spiritual. It is knowing how: 1.) to give meaning to our past and to our future - on the personal level as well as on the spiritual level; 2.) to recognize our past successes as well as our times of indifference as the gift of oneself, the compassion or the tolerance which we have exhibited during our life; 3.) To continue to play a role in society, but by weaving links with others sources of meaning such as nature, mutual help or peace; 4.) To engage ourselves optimistically in life-projects for ourselves as well as for others or in other causes which we hold close to our heart. Simply put, to pray that God's work will be accomplished.

The "spirituality of aging" that many responses to the questionnaire asked to be promoted really finds its meaning here. Perhaps by learning to age gracefully, the simple knowing how to be, the kindness and hospitality of the "older brothers" will forge the key, which will open the door to new vocations.

## **Challenge #2**

### ***Prayer Life, Spirituality, Community Life***

Our present age seems to militate against the interior life. Prayer, solitude, and silence are not part of one's daily routine. Constant distraction prevents the contemplative spirit from growing within our culture and within our lives. This seems to be a fairly universal situation and not just confined to certain parts of the developed world.

Each day is often spent in work, and so our minds are necessarily preoccupied with what we are doing. Television, ipods, computers, and the whole realm of technological gadgets take up the major part of our daily attention. When, in all of this, is there time to reflect, to be contemplative, to pray, to wonder, to be grateful, to give praise? The call of Blessed Chaminade continues to resound loudly and clearly—*the essential is the interior*.

Our prayer life and our spiritual life have become more routinized than filled with passion for God. Thus, we cannot be the witnesses of gospel values and of Marianist holiness that we are called to be. Yet, this is what others are looking for in us. The narrow gate does not allow for mediocrity.

Particularly since Vatican II, we have struggled with the tension of trying to adapt a quasi-monastic style and schedule of prayer to a post-modern world and culture. We crave solitude and silence, but they elude us. We keep trying to discover how to be *contemplatives in action* in today's world.

For almost forty years, since the time of the Vatican Council, the issue of community life has been a challenge for us. The present Superior General noted that during visitations the members of the General Council find “that most Marianist communities are in search, looking for richer and deeper life at the service of mission. In most places, our members struggle with the fact that they must leave behind some familiar community styles of the past, including many large communities, all-embracing institutions, and self-evident cultural patterns. We know that the 1950's style of community is no longer appropriate, but we are not so clear about what should replace it. [*Circular 12*]” This search will continue to occupy us.

## **Challenge #3**

### ***The Marianist Family***

#### **Remembering:**

We were founded to assure the existence and development of a wider community of Christians from all walks of life. This wider community is called the Marianist Family (R.L.1.2)

Intensifying our bonds and working together in a common mission helps us to better understand our identity (R.L. 1.2).

We offer our services and ministries to these communities while fully encouraging their proper characteristics and autonomy (R.L. 1.3).

In union with Vatican II we foster a Marian model of the Church and a spirituality of communion.(CG 2001, SS 31).

To the extent that we deepen our appreciation of the Marianist Family the members of the Society of Mary will better understand our identity as Marianist religious (CG 1996, PH n. 56).

The concern to rebuild the Church based on recognizing the role of the laity in it. The Church is fundamentally the family and people of God. (CG 2001, SS n. 24c).

#### **Present challenges:**

##### **Identity and Being**

- The MLCs form part of our charism and our method of evangelization.
- The Marianist Family forms part of our identity as religious, but there is still a long way to go to live as a Family and together think about and animate the future of the Marianist charism.
- Learn how to live and choose to live as a religious family, which makes the Marianist charism the center of its spirituality.
- Situate ourselves in the Church as religious within the context of the Marianist Family. What can we offer and what can we receive from the other branches?
- Include the lay Marianists in our Chapters, retreats, and councils so they can help in our apostolic work.

##### **Common Mission**

- If we remain united as a Marianist Family we can do more to promote the mission of Mary.
- Emphasize the role of Mary in our lives and apostolates.
- Offer and contribute to the theological and practical growth of the Marian model of the Church as our gift from God, as a Marianist Family, at a time which is cold, stagnant, and paralyzed in the face of an emerging civilization...be men of joyful solidarity and builders of another possible world.

- We need to think purposefully how to live as a Marianist Family, but also join forces with other groups in the Church and outside of it, in humility, for the building of the Kingdom.

### **Vocations and Formation**

- We cannot continue to think of vocations to the S.M. and F.M.I. as separate things, but within the Family of Mary.
- Form ourselves to promote and accompany groups of lay people and broaden the vocation aspect in these groups.

## **Challenge #4**

### ***Our Religious Identity: the Vows..***

The current appearance of the Society of Mary carries the imprint of changes in the world and in the Church. Globalization, new means of communication and of transportation, all that increases the perception that we ourselves are, by that very fact, members of an international congregation. The openness of the Society of Mary to new missionary horizons is not a recent fact: when the first missionaries of the Society of Mary arrived in America, Fr. Chaminade was still living. What is new is that at the time of Fr. Chaminade there was not a decline in the Marianist religious presence in Europe when the Society came to the United States. This is quite opposite to what is happening today. The spread of Marianist religious life in certain countries where we have recently started new works, is accompanied by a decline in the countries of older, longer established works. Because of this, the remodeling of the appearance of the Society of Mary is even more striking.

Other changes in the world are more negative: Religious indifference prevails more and more in Europe, Canada and even in certain Latin American countries. Religion is no longer perceived there as of any importance. The legitimate horror of modern conflicts has brought into the West a overestimation of pluralism and of relativism. The search for an absolute, even though it is at the source of many religious vocations, is no longer considered a positive quality. The production of consumer goods has raised, everywhere in the world, the desire to belong to the upper middle class. This move upward in society has, as a corollary, the loss of a sense of rootedness. In such a context, what is our place? Are we there in order to artificially incite needs, which are no longer there?

In a world which is rapidly changing, the Church is equally changing, at a rhythm that is perhaps more prudent, but nevertheless is very perceptible. The Church itself is also seeing its center of gravity being moved. Vatican Council II took the church toward a reevaluation of the laity. The Society of Mary has put that into practice by means of the rediscovery of the Marianist Family. That is for the greatest benefit for our charism. But one brother was able to notice that from the moment that there was no longer any need to be a religious in order to be a saint in the world, from that point on it was necessary to allow the religious life to be practiced only in contemplative abbeys. The new forms and the new movements of consecrated and apostolic life cause us to wonder if there is some truth to that observation. Certain people are proposing the creation of Marianist communities composed of priests, brothers, sisters and lay people.

Faced with this fact of calling into question so many areas of our life, the brothers feel the necessity of redefining our nature and our mission. The loss of identity is attributed to the ignorance of the nature of our charism, which is no longer perceived by the brothers as being a vital value. Identity is lost because it is not rooted enough and incarnated enough in the religious themselves. But, this is true also because our identity is blurred and it is defined in as many different ways as there are brothers.

Wherever the decline in personnel and in vocations is being felt, the following questions arise: Are we no longer living the Rule of Life? Does our charism any longer have something to offer to the Church and to the world? Are the vows still necessary? Is our religious life still relevant and meaningful? Are we still men of faith as William Joseph Chaminade wished us to be?

But behind all the questions, we can see the dawn of new opportunities. People observe that if religious life is going to disappear, religious indifference is going to grow. Now, we have been founded to combat this indifference. That implies that our reason for being is one that is most in need at the current moment. Thus, hope is not dead. We are aware of the fact that we have in our charism certain elements, which allow us to both answer the desires of the Church in this world as well as affirm our traditional identity in the face of these changes. On the one hand, the fact that we have decided to follow Jesus, son of Mary, could put us in the lead in the building up of that Marian church which the world seems to need. On the other hand, our vow of stability should offer us the means to keep ourselves faithful to our rich tradition in the service of Mary.

Faced with these changes, in new contexts, we have been challenged to redefine with confidence our common identity shared with the Marianist Family in the heart of the Church and of the world, as well as our own proper identity as the Society of Mary at the heart of the Marianist Family. An unrestricted accounting of the effect of the world, of the Church and of the Marianist Family on the current state of the Society of Mary would be of help in this situation.

Such a redefinition, presented by some people as a refoundation, would open up the opportunity to clarify for ourselves (and, at the same time, putting us in agreement) as to who we are, but also to be able to articulate and to explain what we are in the Marianist Family, with the Marianist Family in the Church and with the Church in the world.

If this challenge is picked up, the others will also be taken up. For the same idea applies to our ability to offer our identity and our charism to the young. A clear and easily perceived identity (certain people are talking of visibility and even of a habit) is a necessary condition for attracting vocations.

## **Challenge #5**

### ***The World, Cultures, and the Church***

#### ***Context***

The world is where we live. Our cultures teach us values, entertain us, organize our lives, and show us how to live and love, and provide a system of priorities, what is acceptable and unacceptable. Our Church is the sacrament of Jesus, source of the Gospel and home for the pilgrim.

Various forces are dominant where Marianists live. Religion may be integral and decisive; it may be peripheral and fragile. At home in some places, embattled in others. In some lands religion is normal and heartfelt; perhaps a social commitment elsewhere, and among others a way to understand the world, providing intellectual understanding (framework) without engaging life, and among yet others a rejected and outmoded fashion of life. In every case and according to circumstances we ourselves embrace the way of faith as deeply real and life-giving, we give witness to our faith and conviction of hope, and join in the building of God's kingdom of truth, freedom, justice and love.

Cultures and the world pose great challenges whether it be benign indifference, hostile suspicion, forgetfulness, idolatry of the material world, intellectual emptiness, poverty, misunderstanding, historical resentment, or an insistence on holiness, integrity, large-heartedness and generosity.

#### ***The challenges from our fellow brothers:***

How do we speak a language people can understand? How do we make the best of our cultures and challenge the worst? How can we strengthen today's family? What is the role of religion in today's Church? What does the Marianist charism offer this world of today? Do we remember our insertion into the local Church? How can we be a help/way to validate the role of the laity in the Church?

We need to interact with the trends and forces in culture and the people of the many cultures in which we minister and listen to the Spirit, to be holy personally and effective in ministry?

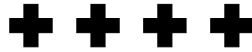
The context of the world exposes us to individualism and fragmentation. We must give the witness of our Marianist communal nature of being together for the sake of mission. In the face of life without God, without meaning, we need communities living the Marianist spirit in alliance with Mary. We need to analyze the world of which we are a part, a world of globalization (mondialization) and genetic revolution.

We must respond to issues of inculturation, economic inequality and ideological/ethical challenges (being in the world, not of it; being modern and yet fleeing the world). With the challenge of a moribund humanity, plagued with injustices, which cry to heaven, a society morally and ecologically collapsed, what is religious life to do, what do the Marianists bring to this situation? How do we live and insert ourselves into a secularized society? How do we evaluate religious indifference and the dominant cultures, and also accept the good of this society? How do we live and announce the Gospel there? What attitudes we do need to cultivate to accomplish this? We need to restore the unity of faith and reason, especially among youth and the scientific world. To

religious indifference we must speak a new language of faith and of the charism in small communities open to interculturality and working with the most poor.

The SM charism has answers to questions about the meaning of human life today and the construction of a more just and fraternal world, being missionaries to a world of non-believers (e.g., youth); announcing and building the Kingdom in a violent and secularized world menaced by dominant fundamentalisms.

We live in a pluri-cultural Church and world. How does the SM affect the culture of a secularized world without God? How can we speak the language of lay people?



# **ACTION #1**

## ***Improve Initial and Ongoing Formation***

1. Implications of an adequate formation of the member of the SM and formation in shared and effective leadership: Give decided preference to the quality of the person and their personal formation, involving them in the task. This isn't to fall back into egoism; everything should be based on a giving relationship, in the love of the other, in service, according to the capacity of each and taking into account the diverse circumstances of the life they encounter.
2. Each unit, in dialogue with the Conferences of Religious of the country, should develop programs and experiences for our young religious, which permit them to understand, assimilate, live and share the new models of religious life which are developing.
3. Choose formators well and assure the means for a good formation of our candidates in religious life, insuring: 1) a good knowledge of the culture in which they are going to live and to which they will offer the gospel; 2) a good synthesis of the Christian faith and the living tradition of the Church and the Marianist family; 3) a capacity to unite and express creatively both realities (culture and identity).
4. Number is not important, quality is. Good formation of personal, intellectual, theological. The dialogue of faith and culture requires good formation. Maturity of personality is to be reinforced. Religious life is not possible with a balanced and mature personality. For GA and all units: form formators and give valuable people to formation; for province and regions: intensity periods of formation: spiritual, Marianist, human, intellectual, professional; for each province and unit: organize programs of ongoing formation for all the brothers.
5. An objective examination of our actual situation in religious and professional formation, especially the period after the novitiate, gives disturbing results. All depends on a good initial and permanent formation. All levels needs to give attention, including the religious themselves who want seriously to form themselves.
6. Improve formation: 1) improve the formation of formators; 2) formation in languages for the sake of communication and exchange among the distinct Marianist units; 3) formation in our Marianist charism and in the contemporary form of transmitting it; 4) formation to be the qualified witness in the option of faith which we have taken.
7. Permanent formation in an affective relationship with God, which assures our conviction of encountering God and following Jesus, not because of regulation but for internal necessity.
8. Form Marianists with a capacity for dialogue with respect for the different cultures we encounter; continue Horizons.
9. (many times repeated) Form priests and lay religious to be masters of the spiritual life and to be spiritual directors; for specialists in Marianist spirituality.
10. Integrate experience and participation in Marianist Lay Communities in all phase of initial formation, which will call for the brother to respond to request for formation activities with the Marianist faith communities.
11. We need ongoing formation on how to guide persons and communities in the Marianist journey; we need to emphasize not only the community dimension of the Marianist charism but also its missionary orientation.
12. Ongoing formation is especially important when the candidates are older. New works and foundations give us a new breath and call for planning and renewal. The development of spirituality, the appreciation of the other, collaboration, all demands ongoing formation. We need to foster a sense of international solidarity in the SM.

13. Strengthen the formation programs that include the experiential; teach us to accept the different cultures of the world; “out of homeland” experiences are very significant.
14. Ongoing formation should proceed thanks to Marianist documents, which bring a deepening, a renewal and progression in our life.
15. Launch a group to develop a program of several years on Marianist spirituality (“Marianist Exercises”) to use with lay groups and for ourselves.
16. Form more formators under the responsibility of the Zonal Conferences; study the causes for growth and decline in the various nations.
17. Insist that our Centers (MAC, Bordeaux, novitiate in Saragossa) offer programs in Marianist formation.
18. Formulate clearly the formation policies that we need to best serve the mission.

## **ACTION #2**

### ***The Marianist Family***

1. A greater articulation at all levels of the Marianist spirit.
2. Integration and collaboration between lay people and religious.
3. Include lay people in the community life of the religious.
4. The religious can participate in the MLCs without being mentors.
5. Strive for a common animation and administration of the Marianist Family, keeping the laity especially in mind
6. Develop the Marianist Family, family councils, the formation of the laity.
7. Participation and integration of the members of the MLCs in initial formation.
8. The S.M. and MLCs need to form ourselves on how to guide persons and communities in the Marianist way.
9. Favor collaboration in formation and mission.
10. Have a common mission.
11. Do everything possible as an institute to extend the MLCs, their organization, formation in faith, working united with them.
12. We need to bring more energy to animating the Marianist movement and having a strong presence in the Church.
13. To support and dedicate ourselves enthusiastically to the growth of the lay branch, respecting its autonomy.
14. Given the actual precarious economic situation of the MLCs, a fund should be created to promote the Marianist Family with contributions from the General and Provincial levels. We need to find ways of financially helping the lay leaders of the Marianist Family.
15. Promote cooperation in educational works, vocations, etc.
16. We need to work together in the apostolate, in schools, and in Justice and Peace.
17. We lay and religious need to multiply Christians and create new Marianist communities.
18. Create a team from the Marianist Family, which can suggest how to live, present and apply the characteristics of a Marian model of the Church to our works.
19. Have common publications of the Marianist Family.

## **ACTION #3**

### ***To consolidate communal and fraternal life, the experiences of prayer***

While many feel a concern for the revitalization of Marianist community life and prayer life, there are few concrete suggestions for action in this regard. Most are framed in very general terms and are sweeping exhortations. The following are areas of focus more than specific actions. From these can develop further programs and activities:

1. Rediscover silence in our lives and in our communities.
2. Deepen the spirit of prayer in our Marianist tradition through province retreats and resources for communities.
3. Develop further a spirituality of ministry and work, especially as a community in ministry rather than as individuals in ministry.
4. Revitalize our prayer life; be creative, make it less of a routine.
5. Stress the interior life, trying to grow as “contemplatives in action.” Learn more concretely what the Founder’s “faith of the heart” means in concrete terms.
6. Articulate further and use more widely the system of virtues.
7. Learn more how to live and teach Chaminade’s Marian consecration in our contemporary world.
8. Open our communities to share our prayer and our lives with young people. Listen carefully to how these youth see us as religious. Try to understand what they are asking of us.
9. Reflect more on what it means to be a “community-in-mission” rather than individuals working in the same or different apostolates.
10. Return to the sources of our Marianist charism, the writings of our Marianist founders and experts.
11. Review the role of the local superior and how he needs to exercise that role effectively.
12. Strive for radical conversion and radical simplicity of life.
13. Evaluate the effectiveness of regular community meetings and make concrete suggestions for improvement.
14. Foster the practice of regular spiritual direction among the brothers.
15. Promote fraternal dialogue on all levels [community, inter-community, Unit] about the issues that touch our lives.
16. Offer guidance on how we are living or not living a truly spiritual life.

## **ACTION #4**

### ***The organization of the pastoral work of vocations***

The pastoral work of vocations is the activity of forming those people who discover in themselves a particular charism for the service of the church. Its goal is to aid these people in the discovery and the actualization of their own vocation. That is done, first of all, by the presentation of the vocation that flows from Baptism, by the animation of faith, learning how to pray and the formation of the conscience. The second step is the accompaniment of these people called to formation to the novitiate. As in all periods in history, and with very specific emphasis, religious vocations emerge and mature today in a very precise environment. It is necessary to attempt to really understand this as a substantial work of discernment, which can be courageous and workable. The activities, which seem to be the most necessary at the present moment, according to the responses to the questionnaire, are the following:

- serious reflection on the causes of the decrease of vocations in certain countries and the increase of vocations in other countries;
- the openness of our communities to share with the young our lives, our work and our prayer;
- to remain in contact with the young by opening communities in other countries;
- the fidelity of consecrated persons, such as we are, to our own vocations;
- the choice of engaging in works for the young - a commitment to education;
- the continual formation of the personnel involved in formation;
- a restructuring of our activities so that they touch the young.

We need to constantly renew and animate our concern for vocations. The people who are in charge of this area are aware that the pastoral work of vocations demands a deep and serious formation - not the immediate recruitment of candidates for the novitiate. It also involves an integration of the pastoral functions, especially the chaplaincy for the young and for their families. A fundamental mission of the pastoral work of vocations is prayer and the creation of a vocational culture, that is to say, the awareness that each baptized person is called to become, like Jesus, a gift for others. It also demands the awareness that each believer is called to take an interest in all the various forms of vocation in the church.

The pastoral work of vocations is an uncomfortable service. It also invites us as individuals as well as communities and even as a congregation to thoughtfully consider two questions. The first consists in asking ourselves if each one of us truly has a concern for vocations and if we know how to rejoice when the Lord gives us some. The second is to look inside our selves and ask if we truly believe in our own vocation and if we want others to experience this vocation and if we would invite them to do so?

In all cases, there is a real need that we revive hope in the persons who are responsible for vocations and who have not yet seen any measurable fruits of their work. As a congregation, the entire Society of Mary has need of this hope. Even more than hope, all of our communities need to pray constantly and confidently in order to put into action the only instruction that Christ has ever given regarding the Pastoral work of vocations: "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest." We will only be able to look to the future with confidence on one condition: that the foundation of our hope is not activity or human plans, but the experience of the presence of God and obedience to His word.

In addition, we must all say to ourselves: vocations will not be able to come tomorrow only from the group of believers that we habitually mix with. They will arise also from a people currently estranged from the Church because of misleading ideologies or by a simple misunderstanding of who Christ is. Therefore, we must learn to address ourselves to all those types of people that we meet wherever we are at the current moment. The types of apostolic works to advocate in this regard can be very significant. And schools could again play a prominent role in this apostolic work, leading us as a result to find once again our roots and our instincts as a teaching congregation.

## **ACTION #5**

### ***Forming Leaders and Resource Persons***

There is an urgent need to have brothers who are capable of being a leader or of being a resource person. This need demands immediate action. We are already well aware of that fact. The lack of sufficient number of potential leaders has been, for example, at the root of certain restructuring in recent years. Nevertheless there remains a lot more to be done as far as formation is concerned.

The need to form leaders is being felt in the older units as much as in the newer units. In the older units, we can observe an imbalance among the generations. “Young” leaders are soon going to find themselves in the midst of exercising authority over a large majority of brothers older than they are and of heading a large number of works where the presence of active religious will be greatly reduced. Such a situation is new for these units. In the new units, on the other hand, it is a question of rooting these leaders, who are by necessity still young, in the Marianist tradition.

The need for resource persons for the Society of Mary, but also for the Marianist Family, is being felt just as much as the need for leaders. There exists the temptation and the danger to sacrifice this type of formation (a doctorate, for example, takes so much time) for the urgent needs of the mission and for the ever-growing number of holes to fill in. However, the same thing applies to the inculturation of the Marianist tradition. One brother asked the following question: “Who will be the Armbrusters or the Steffanellis in India or Africa?” This does not take into account the fact that the Armbrusters and the Stefanellis will still be needed in Europe or America.

Faced with this double need, the brothers have proposed the following measures:

- to activate programs for the formation of Marianist leaders and experts, and free up the means to accomplish this;
- to take note of possible future leaders and experts, and above all to motivate them;
- to establish a program for the formation of Marianist leaders for both the Society of Mary as well as the Marianist Family;