

THE SPIRIT OF SARAGOSSA

A Directed Retreat for Perpetual Vows in the SM / FMI

Objective: A 30 day, directed retreat experience, proximate to the profession of perpetual vows, meant to consolidate, confirm and to strengthen a Marianist life choice, my Marianist vocation.

PART I: PREPARATION

- three days prior to the beginning of the retreat
- three “orientations”: Garden / Chapel / Library
 - Adele’s Garden (heart): choosing a symbol for this retreat
 - The Madeleine (soul): composing a prayer, asking for the grace desired during this retreat
 - WJC Library (head): giving reasons for my hope, writing a short explanation of my desire to make perpetual vows
(These will be shared during the last day of the preparation)
- time for the Director and retreatants to:
 - rest in preparation for the retreat
 - to allow time for the participants to begin to form a community context for the retreat
 - discuss various methods of prayer to use and role of silence
 - understand the role of the Director as listener, companion and guide
 - present the purpose and schedule of sharings
 - discuss importance of balance, relaxation, attending to the body
 - prepare a common prayer schedule
 - time for participants to write a substantial personal salvation history, a vocation story: “How has God brought me to this place?”
- conclude with a Prayer to the Holy Spirit: “Veni, Sancte Spiritus”
 - devise some method of praying for each other during the retreat

PART II: THE DIRECTED RETREAT

Orientation and Foundation: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, born of a woman, that all who believe in Him may have eternal life.”

Week I: ENCOUNTERING MARY OF THE ANNUNCIATION

Purpose: to “re-read” my personal history of faith, my vocation story, my journey with God. This week will emphasize my response to God’s love in Jesus Christ – in my baptism and in my religious commitment.

(The following points can be used by the Director in leading the retreatant)

- my story, my journey (re-reading my personal history of faith and vocation)
- the Incarnation: Jesus’ “fiat” to the Father / Jesus’ self-emptying
- the Annunciation: Mary’s “fiat” to the Father / Magnificat
- my response
 - loving Jesus / “Who do you say that I am?”
 - my baptismal commitment
 - my religious response in chastity, poverty, obedience as a radical following of Jesus
- meditation on the Creed
- Vow of Stability as permanence of commitment
- rituals:
 - formal renewal of baptismal commitment
 - possible Sacrament of Reconciliation
 - Holy Hour: like Elijah’s bread, the Eucharist as Bread for the Journey

Week II: STANDING WITH MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Purpose: to focus the Marianist icon. This week will emphasize the place of Mary in my life, Jesus' new family with Mary as Mother, my Marian alliance.

- Mary in my life: retreatant to write a history of the development of his/her relationship with the Mother of Jesus
- Jesus on the Cross: His consummation of love and self-giving / surrender
- Mary at the foot of the Cross (Marianist icon)
 - Pieta (use of picture): Mary's great act of faith
 - Jesus gives Mary as my Mother
 - taking Mary into my life
 - Jesus' new Family in faith: Jesus as brother / Mary as Mother
- living as a Beloved Disciple: loved by Jesus and by Mary
- Mary continues to form me into the likeness of Jesus, Her Son
 - reflections on the crosses I must bear
- Mary meets the Risen Jesus: a waterfall of grace and gratitude
- Vow of Stability as love for Mary (filial piety); alliance with Mary
 - ring as a sign of my alliance

Meditation on my Marian Alliance: "I am chosen by Mary as an apostle,
And I choose Mary, by God's grace."

- rituals:
 - writing my own Act of Consecration
 - a virtual or actual pilgrimage
 - Holy Hour: Mary gives us the Bread of Life

Week III: TOGETHER WITH MARY AND THE APOSTLES IN THE CENACLE

Purpose: to confront my specifically Marianist history. This week will emphasize the essentially communitarian dimension of the Marianist charism, with Mary in our midst.

- my life in the SM / FMI – joys and sorrows

- Mary in the midst of the community, helping us to grow in holiness, attentive to the Holy Spirit
 - waiting for the Gifts of the Spirit
 - the Marianist Community as a privileged means to growth in holiness, in the following of Jesus
 - witness of the Founders and the Blessed: WJC at Saragossa and Adele at San Sebastian
- a “spectacle of Saints”, sharing the Gifts of the Spirit; growing together in the likeness of Jesus
 - what do I bring; what do I receive?
 - the community lives in such a way that God’s presence is felt: the Marianist community as a sacrament of God’s presence
 - living a Spirit-filled life
 - The Virtues
- “The community makes the Marianist”
- modelling a Marian-style of Church
 - my role in promoting the larger Marianist Family
- Vow of Stability as loving the SM / FMI and not refusing my cooperation; staying at the table
- rituals:
 - renewal of the Sacrament of Confirmation
 - Holy Hour: Eucharist as Body of Christ, broken and shared

Week IV: WITH MARY AS A SERVANT AT THE WEDDING FEAST

Purpose: to appropriate my Marianist apostolic experience. This week will emphasize the Marian apostolic dimension of our charism.

- writing and reviewing my Marianist apostolic experience
- Mary at Cana: doing whatever He tells me
- forming in faith a multitude of brothers and sisters of the Lord
- Marian Missionaries: living a Marian Model of Church
- the Virtues of Consummation: availability for service, zeal and courage
- with and for the poor
- Vow of Stability: sharing Mary’s mission of giving Christ to the world

- rituals:
 - presentation of the Cana Jars made during the retreat
 - Holy Hour: “You give them something to eat.”

DYNAMICS: A COMMUNITY CONTEXT / SILENCE

- daily prayer and liturgy together: Morning Prayer, Eucharist, Evening Prayer
- silence in a place apart; this is not a workshop; lap-tops, cell phones, other reading materials left behind
- 3 periods of personal prayer daily (possibly one could be shared)
- meeting individually with the Director daily
- centrality of the Eucharist each day
- sharing of the day’s grace during Evening Prayer – sharing of faith
- possibility of having one or two older Brothers / Sisters present to help with the logistics and to pray for the retreatants
- Holy Hour (exposition of the Blessed Sacrament) at the end of each week with the suggested Eucharistic theme
- A weekly, evening sharing of the retreat experience with the retreatants & Director
- Some break days (probably 2) will have to be included
- this is a “map” only which needs to be adapted to local circumstances and to the number of retreatants making the retreat
- there might be some value in inter-unit cooperation

The Director:

- a person of some experience, familiar with directed retreats and committed to the Marianist Family
- both Director and retreatants need to be present for the entire period of the retreat
- importance of getting and training good Directors in both the short term and the long term

Prayer Methods: (3 periods daily of about an hour) (“Enfleshing the Word” Arnaiz/Aguilera) -- Suggestions:

1. Contemplative method / composition of place
 - a. this works well with passages from Scripture
 - b. picture oneself in the scene
 - c. vivid use of the imagination / resolution

2. Prayer of the Heart / Prayer of Faith
 - a. loving what we believe
 - b. moving from the head to the heart

3. The Jesus Prayer

4. Lectio Divina (with citations from WJC, Adele, Rules of Life)
 - a. meeting WJC and Adele in the “garden” – encounter, reflection
 - b. “the library”: writing my thoughts to Jesus or Mary and how they respond to me (journaling)
 - c. “The Madeleine”: composing a prayer in response / opening the heart

5. Prayer of Silence / surrender (Carmelite)