

CHARACTERISTICS OF MARIANIST EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

(1) The General Chapter of the Society of Mary of 1991 called for a contemporary articulation of the common elements of the Marianist educational tradition. To this end, serious research, consultation, and discussion were undertaken involving lay and religious educators who work in Marianist educational institutions throughout the world. The process was guided by the lived reality of Marianist spirituality, springing from the foundational charism of William Joseph Chaminade.¹ In our philosophy and pedagogy we aim to:

- educate for formation in faith
 - provide an integral, quality education
 - educate in family spirit
 - educate for service, justice, and peace
 - educate for adaptation and change.

(2) This document, with its description of these characteristics of Marianist education, is offered to all members of the Society of Mary and to all associated with Marianist schools, universities, and other educational works including boards of directors, administrative personnel, teachers, parents, staff, and students. All are invited to work together in the Marianist tradition, adapted to the present times and, more concretely, to the practices current in the daily life of Marianist centers of education.²

(3) God calls us as educators to extend the reign of God in the world through the Church. Education serves the Church by evangelizing, working to transform the world and its people, inviting them to a deeper following of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Alert to the signs of the times and faithful to Marianist traditions, we consider ourselves “in a permanent state of mission....forming persons and communities in a lived faith expressed in service responsive to the needs of the times.”³ (RL 63)

(4) Marianist education aims to sow, cultivate, and bring to fruition the Christian spirit in the human race. For this reason, in all our educational institutions, formation in faith and the animating of Christian communities are truly our priorities. (RL 71, 74)

(5) Consonant with the tradition of the Catholic Church and of Marianist education, we believe that each person has been created in the image and likeness of God. Basically good, the human person is also weakened by sin and must acquire good habits through personal discipline. Nonetheless, human worth

is inherent and not reducible to occupation or achievement. Endowed with intelligence and freedom, a person becomes more fully human by serving and loving in community. These fundamental principles regarding the human person ought to inform all Marianist educational activities.

(6) Grounded in this faith-filled view, the Marianist tradition invites a prudent openness to social and cultural change in the world, following the maxim of Father Chaminade: “For new times, new methods.” We encourage the creative imagination. Facing new times while relying on faith benefits all those who work in Marianist education, including those of other faiths, because it so deeply respects what is most human in students and in one another. In being faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, we live with and for the people of our time and share with them their joys and hopes, their anxieties and sufferings. (RL 11)

(7) This simple faithfulness to the gospel and to Marianist pedagogical traditions serves the Church by making available to all the energy and grace that spring from the Marianist charism. We hope thereby to revitalize our educational institutions and our personal presence, to offer people what Father Chaminade believed that Mary offers to all our lives: “a reason for us to have hope...a support, a help, and a renewed strength.”

(8) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in this vision and this work we give encouragement and confidence to each other. Open and attentive to new approaches, each educator keeps Marianist education up to date by their contributions. Even further, as lay and religious Marianist educators, we are called to offer to those around us the testimony of our lives, to live in such a way that we vigorously revivify the message of the reign of God, already present in the midst of our world, but the fullness of which is yet to come. We hope that this renewal and putting into practice of the characteristics of Marianist education will be a blessing for all those whom we serve in the educational communities in which we minister.

MARIANIST SPIRITUALITY AND MARIANIST EDUCATION

MARIANIST SPIRITUALITY

(9) The characteristics of Marianist education take their distinctive form from Marianist spirituality. Fr. Chaminade spent part of the French Revolution in exile in Saragossa, Spain, where he passed many hours in prayer and contemplation at the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar. Guided by God’s Spirit, he envisioned innovative missionary strategies that the signs of the time were urgently demanding.

(10) Upon his return to Bordeaux, Chaminade's sense of urgency led him to form a diversity of apostolic communities inspired by Mary: first, lay communities, then two religious congregations—the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and the Society of Mary—and finally, schools, teacher formation and other educational institutions. This work took many years. It was guided by and at the same time helped to shape a deepening, distinctively Marianist spirituality. All subsequent Marianist educational work has been inspired by this spirituality with its three characteristic dimensions: a spirit of Marian faith, the building of communities of faith, and a deep sense of mission.⁴

(11) Marian faith, for Chaminade, was a faith of the heart as well as an intellectual assent, a faith so deep that, like Mary's, it could conceive and give birth to Jesus. Mary in her assent embodies the openness and cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit that is at the center of Christian faith. Inspired by the Spirit, Mary brings Jesus into the world, dramatically showing us that with God all things are possible.

(12) Secondly, Chaminade knew that transforming the social order required the action not just of individuals, but of many people working together with a common mission. For Chaminade, communities of faith were the natural embodiment of a vibrant Christianity. He frequently cited the example of the first Christians who held everything in common, prayed, and broke bread together. And as Mary, first of believers, gathered in prayer with the apostles in the upper room and gave birth to the Church, so she still stands at the center of all Marianist communities of faith.

(13) Finally, Father Chaminade worked to infuse these communities of faith with a deep sense of mission. Faced with the devastation of the Revolution, Marianist communities of faith aimed at nothing less than rebuilding the Church. Religious and lay, men and women, wealthy and poor they came together and looked to Mary for inspiration in their great task. Mary, who formed Jesus for his mission, who despite her great faith had to ponder many things she did not fully understand, who despite an uncertain future uttered her *fiat*—this same Mary will form us, Chaminade believed, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to become like Jesus for the sake of others. The person and influence of Mary is a distinguishing thread woven throughout the entire fabric of Marianist spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATION

(14) Marianist spirituality deeply shapes the work of those educators formed through it. The spirit of faith, for example, helps a teacher to be truly present to students not only to teach them but also to love and respect them, created as they are in the image of God. When an educator is truly present to students, students are changed. An educator personally transformed through a faith of the

heart teaches students to be not only competent and capable, but also faithful and compassionate. For Marianist educators, a solid grasp of subject matter and effective, creative pedagogical techniques are congruent with and necessarily complemented by a living awareness of the inescapably moral and spiritual dimensions of education.

(15) Chaminade intended the educational works he founded to be not merely functional and temporary communities, but enduring communities of faith. To bring and hold these communities together, Chaminade held up the ideal of “family spirit” of religious and lay persons, faculty and students, working together to achieve lasting relationships of friendship and trust, supporting and challenging each other in developing their mutual gifts. If a school is to be a community of faith, Chaminade saw clearly that its leaders, religious and lay, must see their work not merely as a job but as a ministry of love and service.

(16) Finally, Marianist spirituality calls for communities of faith to exist not simply for the sake of their members, but to share in the Marianist deep commitment to mission. Marianist schools, therefore, not only commit themselves to effective education and mutual support, but encourage teachers and students alike to emulate Jesus in love of and service to others. Virtue is impossible without some knowledge; but, unfortunately, even a great deal of knowledge can exist without virtue. Marianist educators aim to combine both valuable knowledge and genuine virtue.

(17) Therefore, Marianist educators define success distinctively—rejoicing when their students are faithful to the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, exemplify joy and courage in witnessing to that gospel, form communities of faith resonant with the vibrancy of early Christianity, and use their knowledge and competence to serve and transform society. In countries where Marianist educators serve in a predominantly non-Christian context, we present the same ideal though in an appropriate manner that respects and promotes faith and truth wherever they are found, rejoicing when they are lived courageously and in a spirit of service.

(18) In light of the contemporary situation, this mission seems a daunting one. Modern communication daily confronts educators with vistas of grinding poverty and starvation, with the details of bloody wars and heartless political oppression. In the midst of the tumult, educators may wonder whether their efforts will ever effectively address the pressing needs of the world. At the same time that we work to alleviate immediate needs and work for social change, however, we remember that the deepest needs are those we ourselves cannot fill. The deepest hunger, the hunger that food by itself cannot satisfy, is the hunger for love, the hunger for God. The truest liberation, one that government structures alone cannot provide, is the freedom of being a child of God in solidarity with one’s sisters and brothers. And the most valuable knowledge, which merely understanding the ideas of others cannot secure, comes from loving others.

(19) Educators who impart knowledge for the sake of love and who teach students to love freedom for the sake of service, sow seeds that will bear fruit for generations, and prepare the ground in which can grow a pervasive culture of life, of peace, of love. A daunting task, but our lives and our communities strive to be witnesses to the hope of its possibility. Education in the Marianist tradition meets the needs of our times with a deep Marian faith forged in communities with a mission that effectively manifests the Good News of God's mercy and justice.

(20) If Marianist spirituality profoundly shapes Marianist pedagogy, then the distinctiveness of Marianist pedagogy should be recognized by its special characteristics. Years of educational practice in the Marianist tradition reveal that distinctiveness in five characteristics:

- educate for formation in faith
 - provide an integral, quality education
 - educate in family spirit
 - educate for service, justice, and peace
 - educate for adaptation and change.

EDUCATE FOR FORMATION IN FAITH

A. Bear witness with a personal and committed faith that touches the heart.

(21) Young people need to find a meaning for life that will direct them in their daily activities, that will stimulate their practice of personal values, and that will develop their faith. With their mission of forming others in faith, Marianist educators help youth with the search for meaning, enable them to recognize and welcome the sacred, and guide them toward contemplating the good, the true, and the beautiful. With simplicity and humility, Marianist educators, personal models of prayer and of love, bear witness to the faith their schools propose.

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics.⁵

B. Promote a faith-and-culture dialogue which illuminates reality from the perspective of the gospel.

(22) In the search for truth, the Marianist educator stimulates and learns from dialogue between faith and culture. Gospel faith, with its integration of the intellect and the heart, illuminates our knowledge of particular cultures, while science, technology, and knowledge of other religions amplify our understanding of the search for truth. Serious study of Marianist educational tradition, along with tolerance and open-mindedness, ensures the deepening of the dialogue and gives Marianist educators the tools they need to adapt what they teach to the cultures of their students.

C. Form students in the gospel's values and Christian attitudes.

(23) By aiding students in the practice of Christian virtue, Marianist educators hope, with Father Chaminade, to create a "people of saints." Further, Marianist educators commit themselves to living by gospel values and to forming students in the wisdom of the social teachings of the Church. Students who learn to respond with gospel courage and compassion to moral and ethical problems are thereby prepared to become full and active members of their communities, building a society of solidarity, justice, and peace.

D. Educate in a free and responsible style which elicits a personal response of faith.

(24) Marianist education trains youth to develop the will and the discipline to accept responsibility in the school and in other areas of their lives. Such responsibility draws out young people's unique talents and calls them to mature, socially-conscious leadership. Marianist educators believe that, in teachers and students alike, accepting responsibility for the community fosters a free and authentic personal response to the gospel's call.

It [the Catholic school] must develop persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience.⁶

E. Bear witness with a faithful commitment to the Church that makes the gospel credible today and tomorrow.

(25) Communities of faith and hope renew all creation and make known the reign of God. By living the fundamental charism of the Marianist tradition, Marianist

educators challenge their students by personal example to develop an authentic interior spirit. Together, teachers and students create model communities of faith centered in charity. Such communities bear witness to the truth of Chaminade's words, "The gospel can be lived today as in the early days of the Church."

F. Make present the example and influence of Mary as the first disciple and as an educator in faith.

(26) Students will find in Mary a woman strong in faith. Considering her life, they see the care and concern evident in her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, and the steadfast devotion and courage in her presence under the cross. They see all these things, too, in the lives of the Marianist educators who strive personally to possess the virtues and dispositions of Mary. So, as Mary formed her son, Jesus, the Marianist educator fosters in each student and in each school the same love and mutual respect.

QUOTATIONS FROM MARIANIST SOURCES

(27) "Our primary objective is formation in faith. In particular, we aim to motivate and train apostles and to foster communities of dedicated lay people." RL 71.

(28) "Christian education is unthinkable outside a climate permeated by faith.... The spirit of faith helps them [educators] to free themselves from self-love....and all personal ambition." Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 468.

(29) "Chaminade's attempt to write a Manual of Direction points up two elements which are characteristic of him: (1) formation in faith....and (2) the role of Mary in the spiritual life...." Vincent Vasey, SM, "Marianist Spirituality," *The Vasey Collection I*, Marianist Resources Commission, Monograph Series, Doc. 28 (May 1982), p. 113.

(30) "For us, education is a privileged means of formation in faith. Through this means we aim to sow, cultivate, and strengthen the Christian spirit and help it to flourish in the human race." RL 74.

(31) "Each Marianist school should make every effort: to maintain the Catholic and Marianist identity of the school; to encourage commitment among all faculty members to personal spiritual growth and the formation of faith of the entire school community—students, service workers, alumni, and parent groups; to provide for the involvement of lay teachers in the Marianist spirituality and approach to the apostolate...." *Vision and Journey*, Document of the SM General Chapter of 1986, no. 34.

PROVIDE AN INTEGRAL, QUALITY EDUCATION

A. Promote quality education of the whole person.

(32) The Marianist school educates the whole person, developing the individual's physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, social and creative qualities. Students in Marianist schools cultivate their personal talents, nourishing the desire and acquiring the skills that will equip them to be learners all their lives. The Marianist educational philosophy favors the development of quality institutions which promote a solid liberal arts education and combine it with professional and technical education as the needs of their students require.

Education is more than the provision of education and instruction. It is the awakening of human creative potential; it is the building of endogenous capacities; it is forging attitudes of tolerance and understanding; it is providing individuals with the ability to master their own destiny.⁷

B. Provide coherent curricula; a well-formed, professional, administration, faculty, and staff; and adequate facilities and finances.

(33) The curriculum is a school's primary vehicle for education; the school's environment its primary context for learning. The witness of faith and the ethical living of the educational community have their necessary complement in curricula of coherent scope and sequence. Marianist pedagogy inspires administration, faculty, and staff to develop and continually improve their own distinctive professional capacities. The board of trustees or council of directors provide thoughtful stewardship of the school's resources, especially personnel, facilities, and finances.

C. Develop respect for the dignity of the person as a daughter or son of God, unique and individual.

(34) We encourage students, challenge them, and respect their differences by adapting teaching styles to their individual needs and abilities. In all the activities of school life, students and teachers together develop each other's skills and strengthen mutual self-esteem. But because Marianist educational communities exist not only for the benefit of their members, concern for human rights and responsibilities and for the meaning of life permeates the curriculum and the daily life of the school.

D. Develop an interior spirit and self-knowledge.

(35) Chaminade said, “The essential is the interior.” To strengthen the interior life, we provide time inside and outside of class for nurturing habits of silence and reflection. These habits help foster discerning self-knowledge, critical thinking, and prudent judgment. Students learn to use their understanding and imagination to probe the meaning and consequences of data, facts, and events. They learn, too, that all the academic disciplines are valuable resources for contemplating ourselves and the world in the light of the gospel and our philosophy of education. Deepening the interior life, paradoxically, better fits us to take action for wise and purposeful ends.

E. Develop a concern for global and local issues of culture, ecology, and the use of technology.

(36) As part of a global network of educational apostolates, Marianist educators see all people as brothers and sisters. Access to educational technology for our students is a matter of justice and a critical aid to their quest for learning and understanding. Students learn, however, to regard and evaluate technology as a tool, useful in the stewardship of the world’s resources and the service of humanity. Including environmental concerns in our educational theory and practice acknowledges the value of all life and expresses our assent to cooperating with God’s creation.

F. Foster a diverse faculty and staff as well as a diverse student body.

(37) The Marianist school is open to faculty, staff, and students who bring diverse experiences to supporting the mission. We welcome students from various ethnic and economic backgrounds and educate students with differing abilities and gifts. Individuals aware of their own distinctive talents and heritage are better able to appreciate those of others. Therefore, in honoring the variety of people in our schools, we encourage them to use their gifts toward the common good.⁸

G. Offer Mary as a model of integrity in relation to the realities of the world.

(38) Mary’s visit to Elizabeth urges us all to prompt service and deep presence. Her fidelity of Calvary immerses us in solidarity with the suffering. And her place at Pentecost in company with the other disciples calls us all to collaborate in the Church’s evangelical mission. In her spirit, the Marianist school in its scholastic and extracurricular endeavors balances an active life with prayer, reflection, and service.

QUOTATIONS FROM MARIANIST SOURCES

(39) “I am strongly desirous that the schools of the capital [Colmar] measure up to the standard set by ours and that they may become models for all others of the diocese....If we intend to do business by halves, it will not be worth the while to take so much trouble....Above all I am determined to form really good establishments, before being solicitous about their numbers.” Chaminade, *Letters* vol. 1, no. 202 to Mertian, 18 June 1822.

(40) “True education forms the child from inside out.” F. Kieffer, SM, *L’Autorité dans la Famille et à l’École* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1920), p. 10.

(41) “What pleased Father Chaminade in this method of education ‘is the manner which educators have for forming both the spirit and the heart of pupils while at the same time, they teach them to read and write’.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 54.

(42) “A child and a young person really ought to educate themselves since they cannot truly assimilate what they have not yet personally encountered, experienced, and decided for themselves.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 111.

(43) “We don’t educate for the school, nor merely for the years one is in school, but for life. This idea is of capital importance in education.” F. Armentia, SM, *Nuestros chicos...y nosotros* (Madrid: Ediciones, SM, 1965), p. 247.

EDUCATE IN FAMILY SPIRIT

A. Create a favorable environment for education.

(44) More than simply a slogan, Marianist family spirit is a way of life with specific traits discernible in the educational communities it animates. By providing a climate of acceptance, discipline and love, the school acts as a “second family,” fostering human growth and maturity. From the norms, beliefs, values, attitudes, and capabilities of all the people within a school the dynamic harmony that is a school’s culture emerges. All members of the school community share the responsibility to create and sustain an environment in which can flourish beauty, simplicity, harmony, discipline, and creativity. When this responsibility is faithfully fulfilled, the result benefits and educates all its participants.

In this way a community of learning becomes an experience of grace, where the teaching programme contributes to uniting into a harmonious whole the human and the divine, the Gospel and culture, faith and life.⁹

B. Cultivate interpersonal relationships characterized by openness, respect, integrity, and dialogue.

(45) In the Marianist pedagogical tradition, all members of the educational community, boards of directors, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students communicate respectfully, recognizing others as individuals within the same community. We strive to create a gracious environment by providing time not only to teach and organize, but also frequently to praise, thank, and recognize members of the school community. Because we educate by “our every word, gesture, and look” we listen attentively and engage in dialogue with trust and empathy. By being available and open to others, we continue to make the gospel vibrant in the daily life of our schools.

C. Form an educational community with collaborative structures and processes.

(46) The Marianist educational tradition has long been characterized by shared responsibility for decision making at all appropriate levels. Effective collaboration requires good communication, clear lines of authority, and respect for the principle of subsidiarity. Preeminent among the signs of Marianist collaboration is creating practical structures for teamwork among administrators, faculty, and students. We also seek effective ways to work with the families of our students for mutual support and to reinforce our common mission. Furthermore, we cooperate with other Marianist works, other educational systems, diocesan structures, ecumenical and inter-faith initiatives, and national or international organizations.

D. Express our authority as a loving and dedicated service.

(47) In Marianist educational communities, authority exists not for its own sake but for the common good. Responsibly used, authority helps teachers to educate, students to learn, and administrators to lead with a collaborative style. We exercise authority to facilitate change and provide direction, but also to communicate with trust and honesty, to create in our schools a democratic and harmonious atmosphere. Our charism’s underlying spirit of love and nurturing

encourages a “prudent tendency to leniency,” calling each student to personal and communal responsibility.

E. Influence others by exhibiting the Marian traits of openness, hospitality, graciousness, and faith.

(48) Religious and lay Marianist communities associated with educational works should be a source of family spirit and a model of Marian virtues. In the daily life of an hospitable educational community, we give and receive freely and gratefully. Our friendliness and hospitality signify our trust in other people and our faith in God’s loving acceptance of us.

QUOTATIONS FROM MARIANIST SOURCES

(49) “The true family spirit, the good family spirit, the good spirit (all are the same thing), is composed principally of mutual trust.” F. Kieffer, SM, *L’Autorité dans la Famille et à l’École* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1920), p. 252.

(50) “Father Lalanne used to say: ‘Love alone is the central nerve of education’.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 87.

(51) “Any school and any educator who wishes to be effective has to cultivate family spirit, the only characteristic that will make it appealing to the child and will permit the child to assimilate the good examples given him there.” F. Armentia, SM, *Nuestros chicos..y nosotros* (Madrid: Ediciones, S.M., 1965), p. 340.

(52) “Essential to any Marianist school has been one of its characteristic virtues: Family Spirit. Through the loving concern of the teachers, the young people experience a strong community of faith. Thus, the school itself, can develop into a community of faith.” *Vision and Journey*, Document of the General Chapter of 1986, no. 31.

(53) “Granting that educators are prudent and religious persons, I claim that to impart a good education they must live the life of the family with their pupils....There are three ways of giving an education: by instruction, by example, and by living in community....Example becomes proximate, teaching is understood and felt only through community life.” Jean Baptiste Lalanne, quoted in *The Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 3, no. 379.

EDUCATE FOR SERVICE, JUSTICE, AND PEACE

A. Promote a missionary spirit for the reign of God.

(54) “We are all missionaries,” Chaminade said, “and we consider ourselves on a permanent mission” witnessing the Good News of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission not only in the classroom, but equally in activities such as retreats, days of recollection, youth groups, catechesis, social service, meetings with parents of students, and extracurricular formation programs. The entire school community—teachers, students, parents, friends—is invited to take part. Drawing on every available educational resource, we work to transform our schools into living testimonies to the new evangelization. Jesus said he came to bring “good news to the poor”; it is for this reason that our missionary spirit leads us to give a certain priority to direct service to the poor, especially in new works and programs.¹⁰

B. Educate for solidarity as well as justice and peace.

(55) Committed to the common good, the Marianist school values human life in all its dignity from its beginning until natural death. The Marianist school lives its commitment to human dignity, and to a just and peaceful society, by establishing just internal institutional structures. Through lucid organizational plans, manuals of operation, and internal regulations, we insure that institutional processes are just and collaborative. Our mission statements and general educational policies articulate clear, fair criteria to guide matters such as student and teacher evaluation, salaries, and dismissals. Such actions promote solidarity, reconciliation, and cooperation in the educational community.

C. Attend to the poor and marginalized.

(56) The Marianist school lives the Christian commitment to the poor both through establishing educational institutions directly serving the poor and by preparing people for genuine service to the economically disadvantaged, the handicapped, and the marginalized. The school supports this general commitment through specific programs such as scholarships, handicap-accessible facilities, community service, and support for the integral development of people and groups. Teachers and students work with and for the poor, developing in the school and in the civic community programs of physical, economic, educational, and social assistance. In the Marianist school, the curriculum helps students understand the causes of poverty and the roots of injustice, and makes it more possible to undertake thoughtful forms of action that truly respond to these social and moral problems.

D. Promote the dignity and rights of women.

(57) Created in the image and likeness of God, each woman and man possesses the full dignity of the human person, with its corresponding rights and responsibilities. As women's roles, both domestic and public, attain new stature and recognition, the Marianist school promotes women's equality and encourages their contributions to the school's mission and to the larger culture. The school assures equal treatment in educational opportunities such as leadership, representation and salaries, while helping advance women's equality through programs of social awareness and development. Extending its commitment beyond its own borders, the Marianist educational community joins with women all over the world in their continuing struggle for equal human rights.

...Pope John Paul II committed all of the over 300,000 social, caring and educational institutions of the Catholic Church to a concerted and priority strategy directed to girls and young women, and especially to the poorest, to ensure for them equality of status, welfare and opportunity...¹¹

E. Promote programs of service, encouraging the formation of Christian service groups.

(58) Faith inspires us to service, and the Marianist school helps its students hear and respond to that call. Because education itself is essentially communitarian, the school naturally aspires to serve its local community through educational as well as pastoral, liturgical, social, and recreational activities. Such service and reflection on the experience acquaints students with their local communities and creates the sensitivity and skills they need for future leadership. Occasions for service often arise spontaneously from fostering communities of faith, such as Marianist lay communities within or related to the school, in which apostolic service is integral.

F. Under the prophetic influence of Mary, announce the goodness and justice of God and denounce oppression.

(59) The Marianist school confronts society's problems with courage and seeks their solution with optimism and hope. As Christian and Marianist, the educational community announces the goodness and justice of God, while at the same time denouncing all that oppresses or degrades the human person. Students learn to recognize and to name both justice and oppression through prayerfully seeking the will of God, the thoughtful analysis of social conditions, and through personal and communal witness. In the prophetic spirit of Mary,

teachers and students together read the signs of the times as constructive critics and agents of change with a “permanent mission” to witness to the gospel message.

QUOTATIONS FROM MARIANIST SOURCES

(60) “We have taken as our motto the great word, so full of meaning and truth, which Mary addressed to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana: ‘Whatever He shall say to you, do ye,’ and in this view, we embrace the work of the Christian Education of youth, and especially of the poor, the work of the arts and trades, the work of Sodalities, of retreats and of missions. We undertake all works of zeal.” Chaminade, *Letters*, vol. 5. no. 1182 to Valenti, 31 October 1839.

(61) “We work at the direct proclamation of the Gospel and also at the enrichment of culture and the transformation of society...[in] unity with those who struggle for justice, liberty and dignity....” RL 72.

(62) “One hopes that everyone will enjoy the material and spiritual advantages of the human community...In that tiny cosmos which is the classroom or the school, the students are progressively initiated into a sensitivity for the common good.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 383.

(63) “Preferable a thousand times over are those methods which form youth to teamwork and mutual support. Those who train students should be aware of that aspect of social conscience which is so regularly ignored among us.” F. Armentia, SM, *Nuestros chicos...y nosotros* (Madrid: Ediciones, S.M., 1965), p. 335.

(64) “Our educational institutions must avoid forming persons who for lack of critical spirit assure the permanence of an unjust order or who form an elite using positions of prestige for personal advantage rather than providing needed services for the development of society.” *New Call*, Document of the General Chapter of 1976, no. 37.

EDUCATE FOR ADAPTION AND CHANGE

A. Educate to shape the future.

(65) “New times call for new methods,” Chaminade said. The Marianist school faces the future calmly, balancing acceptance and adaptation. We accept change in faith, at the same time responding through strategic planning based on Marianist pedagogy and Christian wisdom. For example, fulfilling the school’s

mission in changing times requires that school personnel employ new kinds of learning and new technologies to enhance their administration and teaching. Our intention is not acquiescence to the future but the hope-filled shaping of it. We encourage the same attitude in our students, educating them to be bearers of the best of our tradition, and to meet change actively with discernment and reflection. We view the signs of our times in faith, prayerfully open to their possibilities.

B. Educate persons to accept and respect differences in a pluralistic society.

(66) As the people of the world come increasingly into contact with one another, differences among them become more apparent. If the world of the future is to be peaceful, students of today must learn how to appreciate cultural difference and how to work with people very unlike themselves. To this end, we cultivate in our students both skill and virtue: the skills required for dialogue, consensus, and teamwork depend on the virtues of loving acceptance of others and faithful dedication to a collaborative, honest, and hopeful search for truth.

If children are properly helped and loved, they themselves can become peacemakers, builders of a world of fraternity and solidarity. With their enthusiasm and youthful idealism, young people can become 'witnesses' and 'teachers' of hope and peace to adults.¹²

C. Develop critical thinking skills in the search for truth.

(67) To foster the search for truth, the Marianist school encourages integration among the academic disciplines and cooperation among academic departments. Wise teachers and administrators, bearing witness with common sense and practical skills, work together to achieve these goals. In schools thus harmoniously organized, we teach our students to see how Marianist habits of reflection can help them to follow an argument and understand another's point of view as well as how to evaluate alternatives to judge prudently, and to choose responsibly.

D. Be open and adapt to local and global contexts through inculturation and interdisciplinary education.

(68) Marianist education is inculturated distinctively in different cultures. The school most benefits its own locality, however, by complementing inculturation with global awareness. Toward this end, Marianist educators encourage the study of foreign languages, along with international student and teacher

exchange programs, especially within the Marianist educational network. Academically, our schools offer integrated curricula to help students see the interconnectedness of human knowledge as a sound intellectual foundation for effective action in an increasingly interdependent world.

E. “Do whatever he tells you.” Be available and respond to the signs of the times in faith.

(69) In Mary's *fiat*, we see her openness to the signs of her times, her “yes” to the mystery of the future. In her counsel at Cana to “Do whatever he tells you,” we hear Mary urging us today to be equally available to God’s call. The Marianist school, itself a communal learner, discerns what present needs call for, open to adapting Marianist pedagogy as needed in the service of our mission.

QUOTATIONS FROM MARIANIST SOURCES

(70) “Though we are not men of the world, we are not for all that, men of another age or of another country. Our lives are not hidden, they are not relegated to the deserts, or passed within the narrow limits of a cell. To act on the world we are persuaded that we must know it, and hence our life is mingled with all the movements that influence the trend of the epoch, and call for a new order of requirements.” Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, Address Delivered at the Distribution of Awards of *Institution Sainte-Marie*, Rue Bonaparte, Paris, in 1852, quoted in *The Spirit of our Foundation*, vol. 3, no. 394.

(71) “Our mission requires adaptability on the part of our members and a spirit of collaboration with all who serve in the Church.” RL 75.

(72) “On beginning his work, Father Chaminade was thinking: ‘For new needs, new solutions are required’.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 22.

(73) “There are several mutually related characteristics which are recognized in all Marianist schools around the world. They can be summarized as three traits: family spirit, respect for the personality of the child, and a prudent discernment open to the adaptations required by changing times and surroundings.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 86.

(74) “A school ought to be continually revising its methods, bearing in mind the complexity and instability of the real world. The development of new circumstances presupposes on the part of educators a calm affectivity and respectful humility in the face of truth.” Paul J. Hoffer, SM, *Pédagogie Marianiste* (Paris, 1956), p. 113.

CONCLUSION

(75) The characteristics of Marianist education are a gift to the Marianist educational community, but they also present us with a task. We receive the gift and undertake the task in solidarity with the whole human family.

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.¹³

(76) This initiative articulating the common elements of Marianist education calls us to work together toward “the enrichment of culture and the transformation of society in accord with the message of salvation.” (RL 72) The call, if heard, will summon forth our best efforts and bring us, eventually, the joyful and satisfying knowledge that the world is better because we have worked hard together. In this missionary spirit—“zeal,” as Chaminade would say—we strive to:

- educate for formation in faith
 - provide an integral, quality education
 - educate in family spirit
 - educate for service, justice, and peace
 - educate for adaptation and change.

(77) If these characteristics of Marianist education are to be authentic blessings, locally and globally, they must be more than a momentary flash of light in the shadows of the present times. The present elaboration is not an ending but a critical moment in the journey from our origins. Our next steps will need to be continually and carefully discerned. The gracious promise in these characteristics will endure, we believe, because they rest on the solid foundation of Marianist spirituality: faith, community, and mission animated by Mary’s cooperation with the Spirit of God.

(78) The orientation and dynamism of these characteristics are a complement to the competence, collaboration, and generosity of lay and religious educators in Marianist schools, universities, and other centers. The testimony of gifted people united in mind, heart, and action, with a long-term commitment to education will make a difference for the world in which we live. Chaminade often spoke of “preventive” apostolic action which called upon those involved to labor in faith and hope.¹⁴ It is also a sign of our times.

(79) Pope John Paul II has said: “...it can hardly be hoped that children will one day be able to build a better world unless there is a specific commitment to their education for peace...children have a right to a specific training for peace at school and in other educational settings.”¹⁵ Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, continues this theme: “Peace-building means taking preventative action....The problem is that preventative activities attract neither recognition nor thanks....We must

be prepared...to take preventive measures to stop problems from degenerating into conflict. In other words to establish peace in hearts and minds. In culture.”¹⁶

(80) A world of hopes and shattered dreams strongly pulls us to this costly venture of living out the promise of the characteristics of Marianist education. It is a venture that may require more than we may think we can or perhaps want to give. But we have a tradition of giving more. In 1839, Chaminade wrote that “we too have been called, as we believe, by Mary herself, to assist her with all our might in the struggle...of our times.” We—in the tradition of Marianist education—are called by Mary to fill these times with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

¹ “The very charism of the Founders appears as ‘an experience of the Spirit,’ transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the body of Christ continually in the process of growth.” Charisms give rise to a specific character and spirit that influences the works of a religious institute. “This distinctive character also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate, which creates its particular tradition, with the result that one can readily perceive its objective elements.” Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes and the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directives for the Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church* (14 May 1978), no. 11.

² The term “Marianist” used as an adjective in this document ordinarily refers to the situation wherein the SM owns or sponsors an institution. This means that the SM province or region is the proprietor or has direct responsibility for the philosophy, programming/curricula, teacher selection, finances, and management with the intention of continuity. However, in some situations a diocese may own the institution or the SM may “co-sponsor” a school with another religious institute as a result of a merger. Other such modes of collaboration may also allow for an appropriate expression and implementation of the Characteristics of Marianist Education. This document also recognizes that “Marianist” can likewise refer to other branches of the Marianist Family.

³ RL = *Rule of Life of the Society of Mary*, 1983.

⁴ By **spirituality** we mean “a body of principles, methods, values and images which motivate and guide the life of the spirit. It gives form or structure...It educates and guides our interior life and forms our vision and our personality.” (*Vision and Journey*, no. 59, Document of the General Chapter of 1986) **Mission** here refers to a being sent forth for a particular purpose or goal. In the words of Chaminade, commenting on his being named *Missionary Apostolic*.” ...so as to revive and rekindle everywhere the divine torch of faith, to show to an amazed world everywhere imposing numbers of Catholics of all ages and walks of life, of both sexes, who have banded together in special organizations, and who practice our religion in all the purity of its dogma and morality with neither self-righteousness nor human respect.” (Letters, vol. 4, no. 1076 to Gregory XVI, 16 September 1838)

⁵ The Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (7 April 1988), no. 25.

⁶ The Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (19 March 1977), no. 31.

⁷ Federico Mayor (Director-General of UNESCO), “Education, Key to the Future,” *The UNESCO Courier*, December 1994, p. 35.

⁸ From the origins of the Marianist Family, there was an emphasis on diversity and equality in promoting a variety of perspectives, talents, and ministries. This spirit pervades the mission in all branches of the

Marianist Family today and has a particular expression in the Society of Mary in terms of the equality of brothers and priests, knows as “mixed composition.”

⁹ John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life (25 March 1996), no. 96.

¹⁰ “Taking up the Lord’s mission as her own, the Church...in a true ‘preferential option’, ...turns to those who are in situations of greater weakness, and therefore in greater need. ‘The poor’, in varied states of affliction, are the oppressed, those on the margin of society, the elderly, the sick, the young, any and all who are considered and treated as ‘the least’....The option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ. All of Christ’s disciples are therefore held to this option....” John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life (25 March 1996), no. 82.

¹¹ Mary Ann Glendon, Intervention as head of the Vatican delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women, 5 September 1995.

¹² John Paul II, “Message for the World Day of Peace,” 1 January 1996, no. 7.

¹³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 1.

¹⁴ *Constitutions of the Society of Mary 1839*, art. 253

¹⁵ “Message for the World Day of Peace,” nos. 6, 9.

¹⁶ Federico Mayor (Director-General of UNESCO), “A New Beginning,” *The UNESCO Courier*, November 1995. p. 7.