The Marianists
PROVINCE OF THE UNITED STATES

Office of the Provincial

5 September 2012
Mary, Queen of Apostles

Dear Brothers,

The XXXIV General Chapter of the Society of Mary ended in Rome just over five weeks ago. You can read the final Chapter document titled, "**To Enliven the Fire that Enkindles Other Fires**." We are in the process of printing a bound copy for each member of the Province. These booklets should be ready for distribution soon.

The General Chapter focused on issues of globalization, mutual support within our religious family, and the vibrancy of our religious life today. The Chapter asked each unit to develop a missionary project to galvanize the resources and energies of the Society of Mary, articulating a sense of identity and mission in the contemporary world and Church. Our Province is fortunate to have had *Vision 2020* initiated by the foresight of the previous administration since it fulfills this wish of the General Chapter very well. e continue to implement this strategic plan and to make the hard choices required to focus and energize our mission as a Province.

This missionary impulse, of course, is rooted in a deepening spiritual life, and there are several, concrete indications in the document concerning ways to promote this. Shared prayer and reflection on God's Word, devoting "an hour each day to personal meditation" (RL 55), planning leisure time together as Brothers, attending to a more simple life within our communities, re-energizing vocation efforts – these are all good challenges for us and good reminders of the essentials of our common life. The Chapter has also called each of us to develop a "Marianist Life Plan" as a means for taking personal responsibility for our ongoing formation. More details about this instrument will be forthcoming from the General Assistant for Religious Life.

The General Chapter decided to include in its final document the entire report on Mixed Composition which was presented as part of the chapter report from the General Assistant for Religious Life. This report from the General Council summarized the long and important project that was called for by the previous General Chapter. The Chapter reaffirmed our tradition in this regard, the importance that mixed composition has for the living of our Marianist charism, and the particular way this finds expression in our current governance structures. Although challenging in some cultural situations, the General Chapter was clear about its importance.

Perhaps the decisions of greatest consequence for the governance of the Society of Mary as a global family were those surrounding the structuring of the Zones. The Chapter challenged leadership at various levels to find ways to cooperate more fraternally and to share resources more effectively for the sake of our shared Marian mission today. I couldn't help but reflect how challenging this is, both for the Society of Mary and for our Province.

Today, perhaps more than ever, we feel the bite of our vow of poverty. We simply do not have the personnel or financial resources of a previous age and we, like many other Marianist units, are searching for way to "keep alive the fire" of our charism in institutions and ministries that have traditionally been vibrant expressions of our Marianist mission. The work of the Sponsorship Task Force is vitally important in our effort to accomplish this. As our demographics change and as we focus our energies on *Vision 2020,* we are being required to "let go" in deep and personal ways, and this letting go is hard and sometimes painful. However, we must keep in mind that it was precisely in these sorts of challenging times, when religious institutions were in deep flux and the post-Revolution society was in turmoil, that our Blessed Founder, the Apostle of the Laity as he was called at his beatification by Pope John Paul II, began a lay movement that led, in time, to the founding of two religious congregations, dedicated to Mary, and committed to "enlivening the fire that enkindles other fires." This is a deeply Marianist instinct, one that finds contemporary expression in the Chapter document you will receive shortly.

The Provincial Council asks that you read and reflect upon this document, personally and within your communities, and continue to pray for our Province, the Society of Mary and the Church during the forthcoming Year of Faith.

Fraternally,

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Provincial

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