



The Marianists
PROVINCE OF THE UNITED STATES

Advancing Justice

Provincial Chapter

Statement of Province Direction

Working Document

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Advancing Justice
(Working Document)
March 2004**

Introduction

1. In September 2003, the Provincial Chapter initiated a conversation on the approach of the Province to Peace and Justice. In that document, the Chapter offered some initial thoughts on the role of peace and justice in our Marianist mission, the Principles that should guide our work, and some guidelines for the Office of Peace and Justice. A number of members and communities of the Province and several members of the Marianist family have made constructive suggestions for improving these ideas.
2. In his 2004 Lenten letter *Reshaping the Groaning World* (Provincial Letter # 7), Bro. Steve Glodek outlined the efforts that are being made in the Province community toward justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, and some of the challenges that we face as individuals, communities, and the Province. This letter illustrated the many ways the Province is involved in solidarity with the poor, with peacemakers, and those promoting the integrity of creation.
3. After reflecting on both the comments made about the initial statement and Bro. Steve's letter and after several constructive conversations, the Chapter developed a directional statement for "advancing justice." This directional statement provides a framework for appreciating the complementary approaches that we have for advancing justice and is organized in three sections: 1) the centrality of advancing justice in our Province Mission, 2) Marianist principles for advancing justice, and 3) guidelines for the Office of Peace and Justice.
4. While all members of the Province have much to learn from one another and from our work with others in advancing justice, the Chapter believe that this statement of direction for advancing justice can focus our Province efforts over the next several years.

Our Marianist Mission and Advancing Justice

1. "Our Marianist mission is fulfilled through formation in faith, especially among youth and the poor, and through our efforts in favor of peace, justice, solidarity, and the integrity of creation, in particular by forming and advising apostolic communities committed to the transformation of society. The creation and multiplication of such communities is the first objective of our mission." (Sent by the Spirit ¶ 25)
2. As members of the Province we are called to engage in many corporate and personal ministries. These ministries range from our privileged and traditional work of formal education at all levels, the work of retreats centers and parishes. Our ministries also include working with the poor, for example, in the poorer sectors of US cities and with the street

children and unwed mothers in India and Africa, development of employee owned businesses, advocating for life issues, and through advocacy and social change in such places as the United Nations.

3. Yet in all of these ministries the Province is called to emphasize two key ideas: 1) the connection between formation in faith and the efforts toward peace, justice, solidarity and the integrity of creation and 2) the importance of our Founder's idea of forming and multiplying persons and communities committed to an apostolic faith that works at social transformation. The Chapter would like to present several reflections on how advancing justice is a constitutive element of our mission.
4. Traditionally justice is concerned with right relationships with God, self, others, institutions, and creation. Yet God's justice is not only about rightness and truth in relations, but also speaks to how alienation and broken relations are healed and made whole through mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Advancing justice, in our Christian tradition, involves a two fold-dynamic of striving for rightness and truth on one hand and the task of healing and reconciliation on the other. In this view, advancing justice is at the center of being persons and communities in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, of being a peacemaker, and of being stewards concerned with the integrity of creation. This multifaceted image of advancing justice allows us to see it as integral to our work as educators and as pastoral and social ministers.
5. In his letter Bro. Steve pointed to "the image of solidarity" in I Corinthians 12 as a help to understanding the many complementary ways that members of the Province work to advance justice.

If we, as a Province community, are "in Christ Jesus," then we are one body, with many different gifts. We have many perspectives, but all of these perspectives are gathered in one Spirit.

Some are called to teach persons who are poor; others to teach persons who are middle class about their responsibilities to change systems that keep people poor. Some will be prophetic voices challenging our complacency; others will minister quietly and daily to the poor at the door. Some are called to develop policy and organize community action; others will tutor, heal, and advocate for individuals and families. (Glodek, 4-5)

6. Providing direct service to the poor advances justice. Providing the basic goods that people have a right to is rectifying a relationship within the community. The experience of meeting the immediate needs of poor by providing food, clothing, shelter, and educating them for the challenges of life and work allow us to experience the sufferings and anxieties of the poor and marginalized and also to appreciate the many gifts they bring to our community. Sharing in the experience of the poor and marginalized provides an opportunity to critically reflect on the ways institutions shape and sustain the problems of poverty and injustice.

7. Social justice is a form of justice that focuses on the rightness of institutions in supporting the common good. Institutions and social structures are judged by the ways these realities shape and influence the well being of persons and communities and the multiple ways they steward the gifts of creation. Social justice involves organizing for social change and transformation of institutions so that they more completely realize the common good.
8. Because our social lives as well as our personal lives are touched by tragedy, evil and sin, our institutions and social structures fail to support fully the common good. These institutions and structures sometimes provide privilege and special status for some and oppression and deprivation for many others. Sinful structures also shape the way we exploit and destroy the gifts of creation through wasteful use of resources, the pollution of the environment, and endangerment of species and habitats.
9. In advancing justice as a community, we must work both at meeting people's basic needs and at transforming of social structures to promote the common good. Our works of charity allow us to meet the person of Jesus in the poor and marginalized (Math 25: 31-40). As a community we must nevertheless remember that "[C]harity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account ... Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice." (Pius XI, Divini Redemptoris, # 49).
10. Both individuals and communities can be great witnesses to the work of advancing justice. Yet, it is very difficult to work at social justice as an individual or an individual community. The work of social justice requires participating in movements of social transformation. Movements of social transformation are made up of diverse groups, associations, and organization that work to change the way the larger society sees the world, both in the injustices that are identified and the future possibilities that are imagined. Movements of social transformation, in addition, promote social changes that will address the problems of injustice and realize the hoped for possibility for greater justice.
11. While we advance justice through a variety of ministries, our primary purpose is to build a network of communities of faith informed by Marianist spirituality that work at social transformation. These communities do not hesitate to work at social transformation by collaborating with secular and faith based groups, associations, and organizations dedicated to social justice.

Some Marianist Principles in Advancing Justice

1. In building communities that advance justice, we emphasize the spiritual and ecclesial basis for a commitment to justice, the skills to discern justice issues within the local context, and the ability to engage in social change that will address these issues. A spirituality of justice is an important foundation of our commitment to advancing justice. As a community of disciples of Jesus we must grow in perseverance, patience, and hope needed to bring the Reign of God to our world. As missionaries of Mary, the prophetic women who proclaims God's liberation, we collaborate with her to incarnate the Reign of God, a reign of justice. A deep prayer life sustains our work of advancing justice.

2. Relationships and community building are important in the Marianist approach in advancing justice. “Family spirit and the ability to create community and bonds of solidarity where we are has been and continues to be one of our strengths.” (Sent by the Spirit, ¶24 c) We believe that “faith engenders community and community demands that new relationships be lived among people grounded in love, justice and equity.” (Sent by the Spirit, ¶24d). In community building we construct a common set of beliefs and conviction that support the exercise of personal and shared agency and responsibility for advancing justice. In building partnerships and collaboration we organize power to bring about changes in social practices and institutions.
3. For our Marianist communities the process of addressing injustice requires a dialogue between the gospel and the Christian faith tradition on one hand, and the community’s reading of the situation of injustice on the other. Through this dialogue the community discerns strategies for social change that addresses the injustice. In order to collaborate with movements of social transformation that bring together groups and associations from secular justice traditions and other faith-based justice traditions, we must be skillful in participating in the public conversation involved in naming problems of injustice and in deliberating on strategies for change. As we participate in these public conversations of justice, we must be able to listen and learn from others and to share and teach the insights that come from our own discernment.
4. Advancing justice is an integral part of all of our ministries. In our schools, parishes, retreat work, and social ministry we strive to create apostles and apostolic communities that can work to bring about justice, peace, liberation, and reconciliation.