

Preface to the 2020 Edition

Adaptation and change is one of the Characteristics of Marianist Education. Hence, it seems fitting that as we prepare to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of these Characteristics (in 2021), we should revisit them to see if they have held up, given the normal evolution of time and culture. Many would say that, globally, these past two and a half decades have seen the most rapid change in humanity's history. We only have to think of the introduction of the smartphone, the internet and innumerable significant changes in family, Church and other social structures.

The Characteristics have spread around the Marianist world. In the words of the authors of *Identity of Marianist Education: Roots and Heritage*, the volume published by the General Administration in 2017, "... we are pleased to see that this stage is bearing fruit We find these elements—written and lived!—in educational projects.”^v The five basic Characteristics, enculturated in a variety of ways in different countries, have stimulated thought and action to embody and express the Marianist Charism in educational settings. The English-speaking world is no exception as the Characteristics have generally been enthusiastically received and sincerely lived by students, faculty, staff and administrators.

Each Characteristic has a number of paragraphs that help to elaborate the theme. In general, these texts have continued to inform and inspire. However, we have all lived and learned and are grappling with new questions. As mentioned above, some important areas that affect students and educators were not contemplated when originally written, e.g., the internet, social media and increased concern for our environment, our “common home” as Pope Francis has written. In addition, there are developments in the consciousness of the Marianist Family such as our call to witness to the “Marian face” of the Church. The concern with maintaining a proper Marianist identity within our educational works has also arisen, leading to the publishing by the General Administration of the document “Assuring the Marianist Identity of Our Apostolic Works.” Hence, it seemed important to include such concerns and elements in a new edition of the *Characteristics of Marianist Education*.

This edition does just that. There have been certain modifications in the original Preface, the Introduction, the Conclusion and the quotations from Marianist sources, the latter reflecting some significant Marianist educational writings in the past twenty-five years. Much of the text in the explanatory paragraphs is the same as in the first edition, but some subheadings have been reworded along with additions as mentioned above, along with new quotations from lay Marianist educators.

The 1996 General Chapter of the Society of Mary, once having articulated the five Characteristics, went on to say: “We understand that in the many different cultures and nations in which we serve, adaptation of the texts describing the five Characteristics may be necessary for the educational institutions.” Hence, each of the major cultural/linguistic areas of the Society of Mary are adapting the text as appropriate to their context.

However, the present General Council has reaffirmed the five original Characteristics as the official articulation of our educational tradition. Likewise, the spirit of the explanatory paragraphs is to be observed. This English-language edition, produced by the Province of the United States of the Society of

Mary (in consultation with the Units of Eastern Africa and India) is in line with these guidelines and has been reviewed and approved by the Assistant General for Education, Bro. Essodomna Maximin Magnan, SM.

An important addition is the “Message to All Collaborators in the Mission of the Society of Mary” written by the XXXV General Chapter of the Society of Mary in July 2018. This reflects the deepening consciousness—already noted in the original edition—of the partnership with lay collaborators as integral to the Marianist foundation envisioned by Blessed William Joseph Chaminade.

Accordingly, I want to thank Dr. George Lisjak, Director of the North American Center for Marianist Studies, for his role in consulting various lay and vowed religious Marianist educators to prepare an initial draft of the explanatory paragraphs of the *Characteristics of Marianist Education*.

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