

“What is it like to be a Marianist?”

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The question lingers in the corner of my mind.

I sit across from my chaplain, as we have many times before, discussing the things that seem to come up again and again: faith, school, the people around us, life, and the person I am becoming.

It is a strange question to be asked after spending three years in a Marianist school. Quite amusing, I must admit, because you would think I would have an answer by now.

Marianist is a word I have heard countless times throughout my years at St Laurence College. It has always been around me, but never something I have stopped to truly consider.

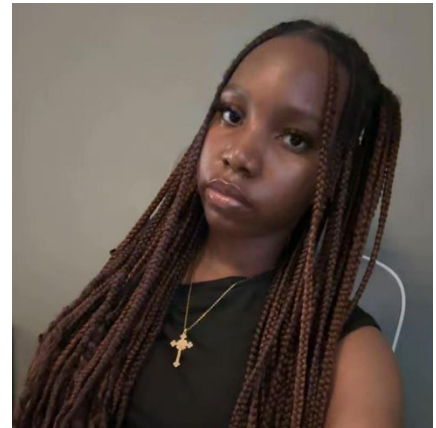
But with my final school year coming to an end and my time here at St Laurence drawing to a close, I find myself really asking: *What is it like to truly be a Marianist?*

The plain answer would be Mass, honouring Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, Our Lady and Jesus Christ, or speaking about the core values and characteristics that shape Marianist life. You know, *the* big details. But the more I sit with this question, the more I realise that reducing Marianist life to the things we can recite or write does not really capture what it means to be Marianist. And, as cliché and generic as it may sound, I think it is the small things that matter too.

When I think about my own experiences at St Laurence, it is not the grand moments that immediately flood my mind. It is the ordinary moments that, bit by bit, build towards something greater.

It is the teacher who stays behind after class to talk to a struggling student, whether academically or personally. It is our chaplain who makes sure the well-being of our students is never overlooked. It is the students who give up their time to participate in different clubs, societies and activities, not because they have to, but because they want to contribute to the school community.

It is the student who notices someone sitting alone and, rather than walking past, chooses to sit beside them and start a conversation. It is the SNA who asks about your weekend or simply smiles and says, “Hi, how are you?” as they pass you in the corridor.



None of these gestures are particularly grand. Some may go unnoticed or unheard in the passing of our days, but perhaps that is what makes them so meaningful. They are small moments, easily forgotten, yet together, they begin to create something far greater: **the community at St Laurence College.**

The St Laurence community is not polished or perfect.

We disagree. We argue. There are days when we fail to see eye to eye, or when kindness does not come as easily as we expect it to. There are moments when we fall short of the Marianist values we are encouraged to live by.

But that is essential to a community. It is made up of people, and people are naturally flawed. We come from different backgrounds, with different interests, personalities, beliefs and experiences. We do not all see the world in the same way, and we certainly will not always agree with one another. Sometimes, those differences can make it difficult to understand each other, or even to get along.

But I think that is what makes our community valuable.

Being part of a community does not mean that everyone has to be identical, or that we have to agree on everything. It means learning to live alongside people who are different from us. It means listening, respecting one another and recognising that everyone has a place within the St Laurence community.

I think the community here at St Laurence really shows what being a Marianist is about. We do not pretend that we are perfect, that we are always good to one another, or that we are all the same. Instead, we recognise that we are still growing and learning, and that alongside our own journeys of growth, we have a responsibility to look out for one another.

It is through the community at St Laurence that my faith has started to make sense to me.

Faith is at the centre of what the Marianists do. It is in the Masses we celebrate, the LIFE Group that meet, and the prayers that are said over the intercom every morning. It is present in the most obvious ways, but also in those that are much quieter.

Faith is not isolated or tucked away somewhere quietly. It is expressive. It can be seen in the way we come together, in the way we care for one another, and in the values we carry with us beyond the walls of the school.

But faith does not look the same for everyone. Not everyone is Catholic, and not everyone experiences faith in the same way. For some, faith may be certain and play a significant role in their lives. For others, it may be something they are still questioning, discovering, or simply trying to understand.

And perhaps that is where St Laurence becomes important. It can be a bridge between faith and uncertainty, a place where the two can exist alongside one another. Being a Marianist school gives us space to encounter faith in different ways: to explore it, question it, learn from one another, and find our own understanding of what it means.

For me, faith is not simply about going to Mass or reciting the perfect prayer I have prepared beforehand. It is about what comes with it. It is about compassion, forgiveness, kindness and service. It is about recognising that every person around me is worthy of love and care, regardless of who they are or what they believe.

Ephesians 4:32 reminds me that we are called to be kind and forgiving towards one another. This verse has always stayed with me. It makes faith feel less like something I simply believe and more like something I am called to live.

So yes, faith is there, but so is community. You cannot truly have one without the other. Faith shapes the way we come together, and our community gives us the opportunity to live that faith out, whatever that may look like for each of us.

We will not always get it right. We will not always agree. We will not always understand one another.

But we keep trying.

And perhaps there is beauty in that.

My chaplain lets out a quiet cough, gently pulling me from my thoughts. She gestures towards the piece of paper in my hands. I hand it to her, slightly nervous about what she will think. She reads through it silently before eventually looking back at me. A small smile appears across her face, and somehow, I know I have said enough.