

# CELEBRATING THE BICENTENNIAL OF OUR FOUNDATIONS

**JOINT CIRCULAR FROM OUR  
SUPERIORS GENERAL**

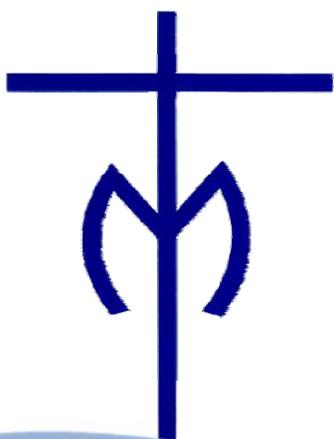


**SR. M. FRANCA ZONTA, FMI**

*DAUGHTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE - MARIANISTS*

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*SOCIETY OF MARY - MARIANISTS*





# CONVOCAION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE BICENTENNIAL OF OUR FOUNDATIONS

*Daughters of Mary Immaculate: 1816-2016*  
*Society of Mary: 1817-2017*

Joint circular of the Superiors General  
of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and of the Society of Mary

Dear Sisters,  
Dear Brothers,

In the coming years, 2016 and 2017, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and the Society of Mary will complete two hundred years since their respective foundation. This marks an important anniversary, worthy of being celebrated with great joy, thanksgiving to God for two centuries of Marianist religious life, of which we are simultaneously heirs and custodians.

In June of 2012, our respective General Chapters coincided in Rome. During that time we had a meeting in which we began to speak about the proximity of this event and we shared our desires and ideas about both how to celebrate it and about what might be the fruit of this celebration. As a result of that meeting, the two General Councils nominated an inter-congregational commission in order to compile the thinking offered at that meeting, and to propose ideas and concrete initiatives for the celebration of our bicentennials<sup>1</sup>. We are very grateful for the work they have done, which was inspired and is the basis of the proposals agreed upon during a subsequent meeting of the two General Councils. These are presented later on in this *Circular*.

From the very beginning we asked: Why not celebrate this anniversary together, as brothers and sisters? Both religious institutes have been “siblings” from the beginning according to the mind of our founders. A single *Institut* governed us along our first steps in the religious life and, when on September 16, 1838, Blessed Chaminade wrote to the Pope presenting our respective *Constitutions*, he presented us together, forming a single unit in his missionary vision:

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<sup>1</sup> The commission was composed of Bro. Michael McAward, SM and Sr. Susanna Kim, FMI, as representatives of the two General Councils, Fr. Lorenzo Amigo, SM, and Bro. Dennis Bautista, SM, in the name of the Society of Mary, and Srs. Nathalie Requin, FMI, and Juliana Mun, FMI, on behalf of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

*“In the sight of God, Most Holy Father, I believed it necessary to found two new Orders, one for young women and one for young men, who would prove to the world by the fact of their good example that Christianity is not an archaic institution and that the gospel can still be practiced today as it was 1800 years ago; and who would struggle against the propagandists of our times, who hide behind a thousand and one pretenses, for the domain of the schools, by offering instruction at every level and in every subject, particularly for the popular classes who are the most numerous and the most neglected. That, most Holy Father, was the plan with which Divine Providence inspired me when I founded the Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary more than twenty years ago”.*

Thus, from the first moment that both General Councils began to think and plan the celebration of our two hundred years of Marianist religious life, we were very clear in our decision to celebrate it together. For this reason, this *Circular* comes to you signed by both Superiors General. With this document, we officially convoke the joint celebration of our second centennial, specifying some details of this celebration, and presenting the spirit that we hope inspires it.

## **1. Convocation**

We hereby call upon our two institutes to celebrate the second centennial of Marianist religious life. This celebration will extend over a Jubilee Year, to be inaugurated on May 25, 2016, the anniversary of the foundation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and conclude on January 22, 2018, Feast of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, including, during this period, the anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Mary, October 2, 1817.

As you can see, in spite of the title Jubilee “Year,” the duration is more like a year and a half. On the one hand, we wish to conclude the celebration with the commemoration of each one of our founders, both in January, as a sign that our future depends on our fidelity to the charism they have transmitted to us by their lives. On the other hand, with this duration, it gives ample time to permit the different Units and countries to organize their own plans and celebrations, at least during a complete pastoral or scholastic year, which, of course, have different beginning and ending dates, depending on the location around the world.

Since this has to do with the anniversary of the appearance of religious life within the Marianist Family, we propose that the celebration center its attention, in a particular way, on the meaning and mission which our founders wished to give our religious life within the life and mission of the Family. Thus, with this in mind, we call upon

the other branches of the Marianist Family to be united with us in this celebration and to help us discover and deepen that meaning and that mission today.

## 2. A motto and a proposal: TO KNOW, LOVE and SERVE...

A motto for our Jubilee Year: three verbs which have been very present in the texts of our charismatic tradition; three verbs covering the whole person in the dynamic of the spiritual life; three inseparable verbs, chained together in a circular relationship: to know in order to love, to love in order to serve, to love and serve in order to know...; three verbs which energize our whole life and mission, to know, love, and serve Christ, to know, love and serve Mary, to know, love and serve our charism... We

propose, therefore, that this motto enlighten all formative, pastoral and celebratory initiatives during our bicentennial. We hope that these initiatives will bear abundant fruit for the revitalization of our Marianist religious life, both personal and in community.



As a motivating inspiration of these initiatives, we fully embrace the objectives that Pope Francis proposes in his recent *Apostolic Letter To All Consecrated Persons on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* in the Church. It has been a providential coincidence that our convocation of the celebration of the bicentennial is taking place precisely during this year. In this way, we can consider our Jubilee Year as a happy “Marianist extension” of what the Church is proposing this year, 2015, for the entirety of Consecrated Life.

The celebration of two hundred years of history requires us to *look at the past with gratitude*, as Pope Francis has invited us to do. This looking back, as he indicates, ought to focus, above all, on our founders, our origins, the source from which springs our charism, which is our reason for being.

*“All our Institutes are heir to a history rich in charisms. At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church. This initial experience then matured and developed, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of exercising the charism, new initiatives and expressions of apostolic charity. Like the seed which becomes a tree, each Institute*

*grew and stretched out its branches.*

*During this Year, it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work (cf. Lumen Gentium, 12).*

*Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities.*  
(n. 1)

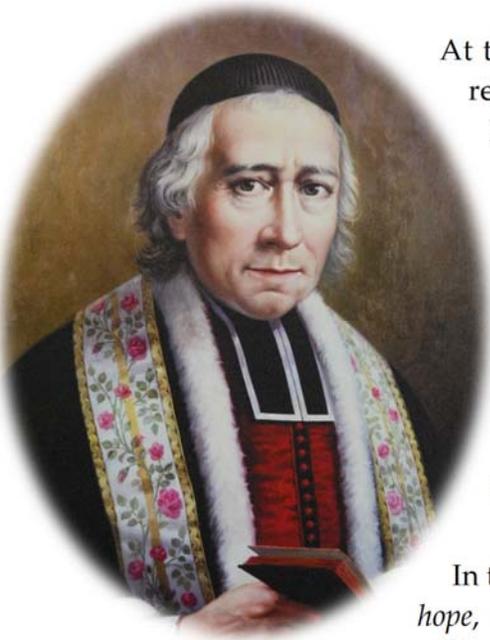
As Pope Francis says, this looking back at our origins is not an “exercise of archeology.” *“Grateful remembrance of the past leads us, as we listen attentively to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of our consecrated life.”* This calls us, therefore, to scrutinize the past in order **“to know”** our own charism better, in order to **“love it”** and **“serve it”** in the present which, following the exhortation of the Pope, requires us to *live with passion*, a “passion” that not only is fed by living the charism, but which springs, above all, from the passion for Christ and his Kingdom.

*“From the beginnings of monasticism to the “new communities” of our own time, every form of consecrated life has been born of the Spirit’s call to follow Jesus as the Gospel teaches (cf. Perfectae Caritatis, 2). For the various founders and foundresses, the Gospel was the absolute rule, whereas every other rule was meant merely to be an expression of the Gospel and a means of living the Gospel to the full. For them, the ideal was Christ; they sought to be interiorly united to him and thus to be able to say with Saint Paul: “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Their vows were intended as a concrete expression of this passionate love.*

*The question we have to ask ourselves during this Year is if and how we too are open to being challenged by the Gospel; whether the Gospel is truly the “manual” for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make. The Gospel is demanding: it demands to be lived radically and sincerely. It is not enough to read it (even though the reading and study of Scripture is essential), nor is it enough to meditate on it (which we do joyfully each day). Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives.*

*Once again, we have to ask ourselves: Is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows? Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart.”* (n. 2)

In this way, therefore, we hope that the celebration of the Bicentennial might be an occasion to renew our “passion” for the Marianist religious vocation, a passion that will lead us to live this vocation with greater joy and commitment, and at the same time, be a call and means by which others might feel challenged and decide to follow it. Among the signs and fruits of this renewed passion for our vocation, we cannot neglect the duty to propose this same vocation to others, by means of a wider and more intense vocational ministry.



At the same time, this renewed commitment to our religious vocation, will benefit the entire Marianist Family, which we feel has been a mark of our foundation from its very beginnings, and in which have felt fraternally accompanied throughout these two centuries, especially in recent years. The renewal of our religious life will permit us to continue to cultivate and enrich, to a greater degree, our common Marianist vocation, through mutual relations among the distinct states of life within the Family.

In this way, we will be able to *embrace the future with hope*, a hope that “is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (cf. 2 Tim 1:2), the One for whom “nothing is impossible” (Lk 1:37). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us.” (n.3)

### 3. A logo

As with all special events, together with the motto which synthesizes its purpose and spirit, it is important to also develop a logo, a graphic image which represents these visually.<sup>2</sup> The logo, which is shown here, was selected jointly by the two Councils, both for its aesthetic character and for the symbolism which its designer expressed through it.

<sup>2</sup> The commission set up by both General Councils for the preparation of the universal symbol for the Bicentennial celebration asked Bro. Sergio Miguel, SM, of the Province of Spain, an expert in graphic design, to present some proposals.



- It brings together all of the elements of the Bicentennial: the number 200, the foundation dates of the two institutes, the symbol of our common Marianist Charism through the name and the cross, and the motto of the celebration.
- 200 years, expressed abstractly as a portion of a bunch of grapes, two hundred years of both institutes, bearers of abundant fruit. The two zeros, intertwined and mutually supportive, evoke the two rings proper to each institute: the silver ring of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and the gold ring of the religious of the Society of Mary.
- The base color is blue. It is intended to express all that it means to be a Marianist in alliance with Mary, and evokes, at the same time, tranquility, serenity, discernment, interiority...

We congratulate the author of this design for his inspiration and for his work. As is customary, the logo can be used in all printed material and other objects created to mark the celebration of our Bicentennial. We will make available, through the respective General Administrations, a small manual, written by the same author, specifying norms for its typographical use, with some practical suggestions about how to incorporate it with various objects and materials. All who wish, may obtain a copy of this.

#### **4. Three major worldwide celebrations**

Three major worldwide events will form the framework of our celebration:

- The first, with which we will open the Jubilee Year, will take place in Agen on May 25, 2016, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.
- The second, will celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Mary. This will take place in Bordeaux on October 2, 2017.

- The third, which will conclude the Jubilee Year, will be celebrated on January 22, 2018, Feast of Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, in Singhpur (India), a recent foundation in our history, where both of our institutes are present, each with multiple communities and works, neighboring each other: a school, a parish dedicated to Blessed Chaminade, a health center and the sister's novitiate. With the selection of this place, we wish to express a projection towards the frontiers and towards the future of our Marianist religious life.

At the center of each of these days will be the celebration of the Eucharist, with the theme of the the Wedding Feast of Cana, in the Liturgy of the Word. This passage, of course, has inspired our Marianist mission since our origins. The first two celebrations, will recall the mission of our respective institutes over the two hundred years of their history, under the sign of the "water" poured into the jars, in obedience to the Lord, and following the indications of Mary. The third, supported by the sign of extracting the wine from the jars, will close the Jubilee Year with a great thanksgiving for what the Lord has done with our poor water, and, for that matter, with a confident confession of hope for the future about what we can continue to do if we continue to dedicate ourselves to "do whatever he tells us," to discern and fulfill his will under the direction of Mary.

Naturally, the convocation of these three worldwide events does not presume that people will travel from all parts of the world to the corresponding locations, something that would be very costly, in terms of economics, as well as impossible to organize. For each date, we foresee that our institutes will be physically represented by the two General Councils, the Council of the Province or corresponding Unit, as well as by the local brothers and sisters and those who, because of proximity or other means, are able to be present. Similarly, we invite other members of the Marianist Family, friends and collaborators to be present in union with us, if they can. The rest of our brothers and sisters around the world will be "spiritually" present at these events, in universal communion, through their own Eucharistic celebrations in their respective countries and contexts.

## **5. A worldwide "icon" pilgrimage**

As a sign of universal communion, a Marianist triptych will travel throughout the Jubilee Year to the different countries in which we are present. The time of its stay in each country will present occasions of celebrations and local gatherings which can help us live the celebration of our Bicentennial more profoundly.

The triptych will have an icon or image of the Wedding Feast of Cana in the center, and on the sides, displayed as if relics, an original letter from Fr. Chaminade and another from Mother Adele, alluding to Marianist religious life.

The organization of the triptych's "pilgrimage" itinerary will be handled by the General Councils. The organization of the meetings and celebrations in each country will be the responsibility of the local Councils.

## **6. Participation of everyone, at all levels**

With this *Circular*, in addition to it being a universal convocation of our Jubilee Year, we have tried to offer elements that are going to characterize its celebration, in a global way. We hope that these might inspire the particular initiatives necessary for local celebrations. The hope is that the celebration of the completion of our second century



might penetrate our personal lives, our communities and works, wherever we might be present, through concrete plans and programs. For that to happen, it requires the commitment and participation of all, at all levels.

In order to assist interchange, sharing of ideas, and stimulate mutual support among brothers and sisters around the world, our web page, [www.marianist.org](http://www.marianist.org) will open a special section during the Jubilee Year, so that Units and communities might be able to share initiatives and programs throughout the celebration. The plan is to open this section during January, 2016 and then, periodically, incorporate materials that have been sent to us for sharing. Notice will be given indicating when this resource is ready for use by all. We also think that it would be interesting if this celebration were to be accompanied by active interchange by means of social networks. More on this as details are finalized.

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Dear brothers, dear sisters, we sign this *Circular* on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, Feast of the Marianist Family, the day on which the members of the four branches commit ourselves to celebrate our common vocation and mutually support our respective specific vocations. We ask the Lord to strengthen our Marianist religious vocation and, from today onwards, we place the celebration of our Bicentennial in Mary's hands, in whose vocation and mission we see ours reflected.

*We invite our brothers and sisters to use the following prayer in celebration of the Bicentennial. It can be recited in its entirety, or as two distinct prayers, concluding always with the Marianist doxology.)*

**1**

O Lord, gathered together in your name,  
we give thanks for these two hundred years of Marianist religious life  
of which we are heirs and joyful witnesses.  
You, who inspired in Blessed William Joseph Chaminade,  
together with Venerable Adele de Trenquelléon,  
the foundation of our institutes,  
grant us the grace to live the spirit which animated their lives,  
the strength of their faith and their apostolic courage.  
Help us, who follow their footsteps,  
to know, love and serve passionately, in alliance with Mary,  
the mission confided to her in the history of salvation,  
that of forming in faith a multitude of brothers and sisters of your Son.

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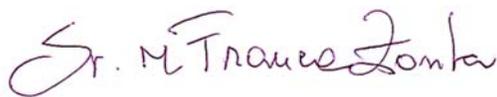
**2**

Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, our Mother,  
we entrust to your maternal care the fruits of this Jubilee Year.  
Help us renew our life and our mission.  
Awaken in us a passion for the Kingdom of God,  
for which your son gave his life.  
Fill us with your merciful love,  
attentive to all the needs of the men and women  
with whom we share this time in history.  
Like you, we sense our poverty and weakness,  
but we trust in the power of the Spirit to strengthen us.  
Make our communities  
a home for love, for justice and for peace.  
So, in your name, we will continue bearing witness to the presence of Christ  
and we will show, as our founders desired,  
that even today the Gospel can be lived  
with the full rigor of its letter and its spirit.

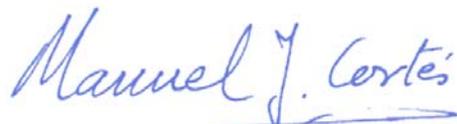
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May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
Be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary!

Rome, March 25, 2015  
Feast of the Annunciation



S. M. Franca Zonta, FMI  
Superior General



P. Manuel J. Cortés, SM  
Superior General

