MIV Volunteers: experiences in 2005 and preparations for 2006
Other experiences of marianist volunteers

Launching of the MVP in the United States
Dear friends of the Marianist Family,

After an intense first part of the year, here are the latest news of the MIV, especially the stories and testimonies of the current international volunteers. By means of the MIV, some of them have recently finished their term of service, and others are now in the midst of their volunteer year. This is why we consider it more relevant now to share with you the current experiences of the MIV volunteers, rather than former volunteer stories, as we did in the first three issues of the MIV newsletter.

We also wish to share with you the joy of the United States Province, as they recently launched in the month of August their brand-new MVP (Marianist Volunteer Program). For the time being, the MVP only offers volunteer opportunities to US citizens, since this is only their first year of existence, and as such they need a little bit more time of consolidation prior to accepting international volunteers in their program.

Congratulations to the US Province, to the MVP program, and to its director, Daniel Ritcher, for opening this new opportunity of Marianist mission, which has been in need of reopening in the US for a while now. May God bless and guide these new volunteers in their new endeavor.

In this issue we will also mention the experiences of other Marianist volunteers who finished their term of service during the first part of this year, and which have not been coordinated by the MIV.

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May Mary our Mother keep on inspiring and guiding us in our mission of bringing her Son to the world today, in all those parts of the world where we are called to work.

José Luis Pérez MLC
MIV Coordinator

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A word of appreciation to all those who constantly support and help publicize the MIV, and we hope that there will more people who cooperate with the MIV in the near future, as it is a clear example of shared mission between lay and religious Marianists.
MIV volunteers 2005

At this particular moment, the MIV is happy to share with you all the following volunteer experiences that have been made possible thanks to the MIV and to the support of many people within the Marianist Family who have collaborated with us:

**Patrick and Amy**
Two young graduates from the University of Dayton, who between August 2004 and June 2005 volunteered in El Callao, Peru, at the Chaminade Institute of adult training and formation. Here, they lived with local families, who welcomed and loved them as if they were their own children. Their placement and mission was at the Chaminade Institute, where they worked with the students, and with the catechism and human formation teachers. They also animated and participated in the local MLC, and they collaborated with the pastoral work of the local parish. Thank you Pat and Amy for your wonderful testimony of inculturation and of shared mission with the lay and religious Marianists in Callao. Another big thank you to Brother Phil Melcher SM too for his continuous support to the Marianist volunteers in El Callao.

“…I guess as I look back in conclusion of my time here, I’m still a little dubious as to whether the actual material product that Amy and I created for the Institute will have some great effect. But what I now know is that it hardly matters at all. What has had an effect is the relationships I’ve built here. The friendships I’ve made with a few Peruvians will continue to impact my life for years to come, my relationship with Amy matured immeasurably, and my relationship with Christ has deepened. I answered a call that God placed in my heart, and this is probably the most important consequence of all. Because now I know that I can; and the next time He comes knocking I expect that it’ll be just a little bit easier to hear Him, pry open that door, and do what He asks of me. Even though I know what a great challenge it will be. What an incredible adventure!”

Thank you Pat and Amy for your wonderful testimony of inculturation and of shared mission with the lay and religious Marianists in Callao. Another big thank you to Brother Phil Melcher SM too for his continuous support to the Marianist volunteers in El Callao.
Gabriela
A young woman, member of the MLC in Santiago de Chile, who since December 2004 has been volunteering in the Otuzco Hills, also in Peru. She’s living in a mixed community with lay and religious Marianists. She works in the explicit evangelization of the local community by means of catechism, animation in the liturgies and of the local small church communities, and in the broadcasting of the Good News through a local radio called Radio Chaminade. We highly recommend you to visit the site www.marianistas.cl, where you can read Gabriela’s stories and see the photo gallery of her experience as a Marianist international volunteer. Thank you Gabriela for your bold testimony of Marianist shared mission, and for your protagonist role in the Marianist Family in Chile today, as a result of your mission in Peru. Another big thank you to Father Javier Nugent SM too, the coordinator of the Pastoral Formation Center in Otuzco, Peru, for his continuous support to the national and international Marianist volunteers.

“… It is also a truly rich experience because we are learning new habits, and we are meeting new people that we are growing to love. We share many special moments with them, like the missions, or our responsibilities in the schools. Each time we visit the different communities, people welcome us wholeheartedly, and this is not because we bring them gifts, but because we go to their houses even if we come from so far away, and they realize that even if they live so far from everything, the Church has not forgotten them. That’s why the mission that the Marianists are doing is so beautiful and important, because we bring the Word of God to those places that are difficult to reach…” (Gabriela’s reflections in January 2005)

“…This past time has been wonderful, since my brother and my Mom had the chance to visit me. My work I think has been going pretty well, since people are really eager to learn more every day, they attend all the retreats and the activities we propose to them, and this is a great source of encouragement, to keep on working day after day and to do it even better. Besides, the relationships in the community have been strengthened, since we’ve been living together for 8 months now. It’s amazing how time flies by! It’s been a time of personal and community growth and development. The truth is that I feel better day by day, and I really want this time to go by as slowly as possible, so as to enjoy it and make the most of it. I hope that many others will feel this call to give up a year of their lives at the service of the poor and of the One who gave up his own life, so we can all live joyfully, I guess you all know who He is… GOD…” (Gabriela’s current reflections, August 2005)
Other experiences of marianist volunteer

**Alvaro del Cerro**
Lay Marianist from Madrid, 37 years old, history teacher at Amoros Brothers School in Madrid, he volunteered between mid 2004 and June 2005 with a Marianist program of non-formal education in Marília, Brasil, for the poor children of the “favelas”, the Brazilian slums. He gave computing classes to the kids and was in charge of the web page of the program. He also cooperated in some recreational activities of the children, like Circus and Dances. Alvaro lived this experience on his own, after becoming acquainted with this Marianist work and thus being invited to volunteer in it. Nevertheless, he was always in contact with the MIV, and he had two personal meetings with its coordinator, one in Buenos Aires, while he was a volunteer in the month of April, and the other one in Madrid, in the month of July.

**Ignacio Anastasio**
Lay Marianist from Argentina, 29 years old, he lived an experience as a NATIONAL volunteer in the south of Argentina, volunteering with the Parish Cristo Resucitado of General Roca, in the Province of Rio Negro. He gave tutoring classes in the San Cayetano Home, to the girls who come from the rural areas and live in the home while they do their high-school studies. In the rural areas, he conducted a guitar workshop in the Chapel of The Rivera area, and another one in the Mosconi area, where he also worked with the local community. In the parish, he also gave a hand with adults’ catechesis, and he accompanied Father Javier Aguirre SM in his many trips to the rural communities. Ignacio did not volunteer through the MIV either, but he always kept the MIV updated on his experience, which he did between July 2004 and February 2005.
"...I hope that many others will feel this call to give up a year of their lives at the service of the poor..." 

Prospective MIV volunteers

The MIV is currently accompanying and supporting the following candidates as they do their discernment and make their final preparations:

**Jane**
A 25-year-old lay Marianist from Malawi, who as soon as her visa documentation is ready, she will start her year of service in Bangladesh, at the IIRD (Integral Institute of Rural Development), supported and coordinated by Father Bill Christensen SM.

**Phil y Jérémie**
Two French guys in their early twenties, recommended by Father Bertrand Bougé SM. They have already been accepted by Father Bill Christensen SM to volunteer for a short term in Bangladesh at the end of 2005. They will probably extend their term of service as marianist volunteers immediately afterwards in India in 2006.

**Lucas**
He met the Marianists through his brother and Father Ted Cassidy SM in New Jersey, USA. He is currently getting ready for his year of service as a Marianist volunteer also in Callao, Peru, where Pat and Amy volunteered this past year. He will volunteer with the Chaminade Institute with his skills in information technology and marketing.

**Nathalie**
A French young woman currently studying classic languages in Austria, who is thinking of volunteering either in Kara, Togo, or in Brazzaville, Congo as soon as she graduates next year.

During the month of July 2005, José Luis Pérez MLC, MIV Coordinator, participated as a translator at Horizons 2005, an international formation meeting for young religious Marianists, in Bordeaux, France. At this meeting, he presented the MIV to over 40 religious from all over the world, as well as to the participants at the 4th International Meeting of the Marianist Lay Communities, which was also held in Bordeaux during the month of July. Over 500 MIV brochures in English, French and Spanish have been distributed at both meetings, so that they may be in turn distributed in the participants’ units and communities to all those people who are interested in volunteering with the Marianists. We are very grateful to the organizers of both meetings for the opportunity we were given to introduce the MIV and its mission to so many representatives of the Marianist Family from all over the world.
Launching of the MVP in the United States

The Marianist Volunteer Program provides opportunities for men and women of faith to share in the Marianist Charism by building a community in mission for peace, justice, and solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

The following are the first six MVP volunteers and their assignments:

**Liz Cooke**
New Orleans - She will be working at a crisis pregnancy center.

**Greg Pardo**
Uxpanapa, Mexico - DECAMP program of Rural Development.

**Nick Raddell**
San Antonio - youth center.

**Dacian Vogt**
Cincinnati - teaching at St. Francis de Sales; helping with Urban Plunges.

**Robert Bowie**
San Antonio - urban ministries, aftercare program.

**Thomas Mole**
San Antonio - housing program for the poor.

The six MVP volunteers were commissioned on August 7th 2005 at Bergamo Center in Dayton. The volunteers spent the previous week in an orientation program. The topics included the Marianist Charism, leadership, service, and simplicity and justice.