

Principles of Marianist Educational Praxis

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Translated from Spanish by Charles H. Miller, SM



MARIANIST EDUCATION
HERITAGE AND FUTURE

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Volume 2



**MARIANIST EDUCATION
HERITAGE AND FUTURE**

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PREFACE

The publication which we present here forms a part of the collection of *Marianist Education: Heritage and Future*, a series of essays on Marianist education that came out of a project which began to take shape, four years ago, under the leadership of the Assistant General for Education of that time.

We Marianist religious have been creating educational works since our very origins, almost two centuries ago. Today we continue all over the world to dedicate the best of our human and material resources to education. The practical implementations are accompanied, as always, by reflection about the task to be accomplished, the ways of responding creatively to novel and unforeseen situations, and the means for transmission of our experience and wisdom to new generations of educators.

In this way, the Marianist educational tradition has been enriched over the years, nourished by the reflection, competence

and creativity of those who carry on the initial commitment. Marianist educators – at the beginning all were Marianists, while today almost all are laity – have known how to maintain an on-going dialogue with their environs so that their formational goals might continue being incarnated in each human situation.

Again today, current circumstances demand our attention. The internal conditions of the Society of Mary and of our own establishments need our renewed planning. The growing development of Marianist works in new countries and cultures, along with the consequent need to transmit to them an up-to-date Marianist pedagogy, as well as the majority presence of lay persons in almost all the positions of responsibility, are realities that mark the way forward in Marianist education.

Given these considerations, the idea arose to undertake the project of *Marianist Education: Heritage and Future*. The desire to deepen and to develop the content of the document on our educational characteristics impelled us to create something new. The growing interest in knowing our charism and the current contributions of the educational sciences have inspired and oriented our efforts. The new circumstances facing the youth and families of the societies where we are present urge us along in this task.

The books which form the collection are intended to respond to these needs. They are the result of a process of study, reflection and dialogue, and are meant to offer guidelines for a

Marianist education capable of inspiring individuals and of transforming society. The target readerships are the many diverse groups of men and women interested in Marianist education: *Marianist religious* currently dedicated to education, both those who are now preparing themselves for it and those who have consecrated their entire lives to it; *lay persons* who direct, animate and teach in a Marianist institution, so that they can take on an educational project that might give meaning to their efforts and fill them with enthusiasm; *pastoral workers and other educators*, so that they might accomplish their task with awareness of the principles and motivations which inspire Marianist works; *those who animate and govern* Marianist life according to diverse levels of responsibility; *parents of the students*, who also begin a process of formation when their children enter an educational institution. The project is also directed to *alumni*, to *the society* in which we are present and to all those interested in education. Finally it is directed to local churches, so that they might understand more deeply what the Marianist educational works intend to do.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to better serve the *children and young people* who come to our educational institutions, and who are the principal addressees of all our efforts.

The purpose of this whole project is to offer a good instrument for promoting formation, reflection and dialogue in different Marianist surroundings. It can serve, at the same time, as a point of reference and of inspiration for local educational projects. For that reason it includes theoretical reflections, as

well as more concrete proposals. The *Characteristics of Marianist Education* are thus framed in a comprehensive study that intends to be thorough and rigorous, but yet accessible.

The ensemble of the work consists of various segments, each of which is developed in an independent publication. The purpose of the first segment, *Charism and Educational Mission*, is to show how the Society of Mary's dedication to education is closely related to its very identity. In the segment on *Educational Principles* we intend to plumb the depths of the foundations of Marianist education utilizing the contributions of anthropology and theology, showing the vision of society, of the world and of the person which we try to form, as well as of the educational institution where the work is to be carried out. The third topic addressed is the *Context*, given that the Marianist institutions must take account of, along with general principles, the needs, expectations and conditions proper to each locale, as well as of the advances of the pedagogical sciences and new technologies. The fourth segment treats the *Identity* of Marianist education, the heir of a rich tradition with distinctive traits that respond to the principles studied in the preceding chapters. The fifth section deals with the *Educational Activity* which is developed in diverse institutions and considers as well some agents and specific addressees. The sixth theme refers to *Animation and Leadership* of the Marianist educational works, since the accomplishment of their objectives depends in great part upon those who bear the burdens of leadership responsibility.

Under the title of *New Education in New Scenarios*, we intend to bring together in the seventh section the contributions of countries or continents more culturally distant from the Western environment in which Marianist education was born, or where there is as yet less of a tradition.

To carry this whole project forward we have enjoyed the collaboration of a very valuable team. Among the authors are religious and lay persons, men and women, dedicated specifically to the Marianist educational mission or having responsibilities in this area. Naturally, they share the experience of their proper cultural environment, but they do not lose sight of the universal dimension of their considerations.

The book you now have in hand is, then, the second in the collection and is entitled *Principles of Marianist Educational Praxis*. Here we consider the foundations of Marianist education from the perspectives of anthropology and theology, and we attempt to show its the social and institutional criteria in our educational praxis. The *principles* – anthropological, theological, social, institutional – treated here are rooted in a charism, a spirituality, a history marked by their origins. They are, therefore, principles which continue to be developed and applied in our concrete educational praxis. They retain a relationship, nevertheless, with the content of the first book of this collection and open the way for those that follow in it. For that reason, some of the questions treated here appear also in other places, although studied there from distinct and complementary perspectives.

This book was written by a team of Marianist educators from Latin America. All of them, one religious and three lay persons, are quite knowledgeable about our educational praxis and its history. They have been or are teachers, directors, researchers in the pedagogical sciences or coordinators of the Marianist mission in their countries.

José María Arnaiz, a Marianist priest, undertook to coordinate the overall project. He lives and works in Chile and is currently the Regional Superior of the religious in that country. Holding licentiate degrees in philosophy and in theology and his doctorate in anthropology, he is well versed in Marianist education, a field in which he has worked for many years and in which he has held several positions in teaching and administration. He has also had responsibilities at various levels in the Society of Mary and in national and international organizations of religious. He is the author of many books, articles and conferences, covering a variety of topics in education, theology, spirituality and religious life.

Rosa M. Neuenschwander de Rivas has a long history as an educator in the Marianist Colegio María Reina in Lima, Peru, where she has been a teacher, an academic director at various levels and principal. She holds the teaching certificate for primary education as well as several upper level specializations in educational fields. She is currently Directress of the Regional Office of Marianist Education in Peru, with the mission of coordinating and guiding the educational work of all the Marianist schools in the country.

Jorge Figueroa has been teacher and rector in the Colegio Santa María de la Cordillera in Santiago de Chile and is currently Executive Director of the Fundación Chaminade, which administers the schools of the Marianist Region of Chile. Holding the licentiate degree in history and geography and a master's in education, he has taught in the Faculty of Education in the Catholic University of Chile and in educational training programs at Diego Portales University. Author of textbooks in the social sciences, he also collaborates in courses for the Virtual Learning Community for formation in faith at the University of Dayton.

Gustavo Magdalena is from Argentina, a teacher with the licentiate degrees in history and educational administration. He has taught at the middle school, senior high school and university levels. He was the Rector of the Colegio Marianista in Buenos Aires and is currently Executive Director of the Marianist Cultural Institute, which administers and animates all the Marianist educational institutions in Argentina. He is also a professor in the Faculty of Education of the Catholic University of that country and author of several books on educational topics.

Although each individual was responsible for the writing of just one chapter, all four worked together in a coordinated way, sharing their work and their perspectives on the common objective and on the content of the various sections. To all of them our sincere thanks for their work – serious, rigorous and profound – and for the time they have dedicated to it. Our

thanks also to those who have contributed with suggestions and contributions for the refinement of the text.

At the end of each chapter some questions for reflection and discussion have been added.

They are intended as suggestions, to which others can be added, for personal consideration or for a possible group dialogue. In this way the implementation of the book's content can be more profoundly applied to the concrete situation of each educational institution – be it a school, a university or a non-formal educational work.

We are convinced that this text is a very valuable contribution to the reflection upon the Marianist educational enterprise and that the latter will continue, now and in the future, to play a relevant and qualitative role in any part of the world, “giving life and life in abundance.”

Essodonna Maximin Magnan, SM
Assistant General for Education
October 2014

INTRODUCTION

In this book we present the overarching principles of Marianist education, found in its own tradition, as well as in the creative reflection that is going on in our days about this important human task. For this, we shall bring together the accumulation of Marianist educational know-how of the past two centuries and join to it the contributions of current educational theory. All this will help us to see Marianist education as it is today and what it holds for the future.

We wish to indicate at the beginning that these principles *are indispensable* for a group that would make a valuable contribution to society in this field, and which proposes to do so on a global scale. It is not possible to educate well if the powerful light of sound principles is not present to guide the educational work in the classroom, in the chapel, the library, the playgrounds and the offices of the school. Those principles help us avoid missing the forest because we are too focused on the branches of individual trees, too bogged down in details.

They help us to pay attention to what is fundamental and to what unites us, without denying our diversity. They bring us back to the sources of the life of an educational institution. With those principles we charge into action. Merely teaching the principles is not enough, however; we need to live them and put them to work every day.

Since they are principles, they are on page one of the Marianist educational enterprise; they are enfolded in *values*, *competencies* and in *modi operandi*. They are the starting point of the lifeblood that circulates throughout a Marianist school. They support a multidimensional life: academic, artistic, athletic, religious, social and civic. They become the wiring that empowers and connects the multiple activities in a Marianist school.

Of course, we need to be precise about what these educational principles are. As principles they take us to the essential, to the fundamental elements of the existence of the human person, of God, of society and of the school itself. They center us in what is lasting and permanent, in an engagement with good tradition. Chinese wisdom reminds us that if we wish to plan for one year, we sow corn, if we wish to plan for ten years, we plant trees; *if we have a broader vision and wish to plan for a lifetime, we educate persons.*

For this, we need the clarity furnished by a few good principles, principles which we identify with the powerful ideas that motivate everything and everyone who shares in an educa-

tional work. These are principles that are general and broad, but put their seal and mark in the work of every day. *Great individuals are guided by great principles.* With those principles they establish the frame of reference for their praxis and move on into its concrete implementation. With an eye on those principles we position ourselves in the values which are lived and spread.

These principles are *educational*. In what they are and in what they seek to be, they frame and motivate educational activity. Through them we penetrate to the heart of the human person. These principles, which show up in the decisions that need to be made, influence educational praxis, and impact our concept of the human person and all that the latter implies.

The listing of these principles contributes in a very concrete way to the formulation of the profile of persons, groups and the Marianist school. The principles give birth to the values that we cultivate in the works and to the attitudes that we try to develop in the persons and in the animating spirit of our institutions. We propose to present those that are most important for assuring that the education imparted in a Marianist school be an authentic and truly Marianist education. We will be concentrating on the *anthropological, social, institutional and theological principles*.

We have sought the inspiration for our reflections in the gospel, in the educational traditions of human history and experience, in the documents of the Church, in the words and writings of

the Reverend William Joseph Chaminade, in the educational praxis of the Society of Mary and in the current global setting of Marianist educational institutions . In these sources are to be found the vital and fruitful Marianist spirit, the strong and vigorous principles we here present.

It is not easy to say the last word in education; it is art and technique, mission and charism, organization and spirit, traditional praxis and planning for the future. It demands, therefore, a vision that is integral in its complexity. Educational principles *cannot be precisely articulated without entering into a process of wise and balanced research*. It is, however, absolutely essential that it be undertaken and done in an original and purposeful manner.

For the development of these principles, we have drawn upon the contributions of several sciences to enrich their content. We have been inspired in this work by the educational intuitions of the Founder and the more developed concepts of our educational tradition, by the reflections of the Church about these aspects of its mission, and of course by Sacred Scripture.

For us, the contents of this book would be a kind of *credo of Marianist education*, what we need to believe if we are to expect so much from it. These grand principles lead us to discover the spirit that animates us, to commit ourselves unconditionally to Marianist education and to have confidence in the tremendous benefits that it has given and continues to give to

society, to the Church and to each person involved in it. Every Marianist educator is called, along with many other men and women, to an educational mission where he can be a witness to a marvelous experience, an experience that is the outcome of a great common undertaking and of a faith commitment to the creed that underlies our hope.

We can present these principles out of a very simple and important motive. *Marianist education is alive; in it there are a few things that are infallible and among them, of course, is love.* Thus, this educational style grows and spreads itself, improves in quality, becomes fruitful and meaningful. It is enshrined in the lives of men and women who are the mature fruit of this life-giving spring. The water that flows through them nourishes an educational style that is inspired by the Marianist charism and spirituality and is expressed in the words, attitudes, gestures and actions which flow from it.

We live in a world which has exchanged the compass for the clock. But education understands “*slowly but surely,*” and it knows how to avoid losing its “*true north.*” It is, therefore, fundamental, as we shall see in this book, to call upon and delve into the great principles that inspire and lead us. There is no doubt that the way we conduct educational activities in a Marianist school follows some particular parameters and combines optimism and trust in other persons and in God. It is from just this point that we rethink and reconstruct our human experiences, assigning meaning to them so that they

might help us in deciding where to go and what to do. Thus shall we live hoping against all hope if necessary, because it is the spirit of Mary that impels us forward.

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Chapter I

THE VISION OF THE HUMAN
PERSON IN MARIANIST EDUCATION

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

José María Arnaiz, SM

Each group in the Church, each culture or people, each political or social organization, each educational undertaking includes a specific vision of the human person. We Marianists have ours. Starting from the charismatic intuitions of Father Chaminade, from our tradition, from our diversified presence in the world, from our spirituality, the Marianist Family has developed through the years a specific way of thinking, of feeling and of acting in regard to the human person. *This human substratum underlies the educational work of the Marianists.* For us, to educate is to transform and enhance the human quality of our lives; we strip away all that is inhuman in order “to clothe [ourselves] with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24 *NRSV*).

These great anthropological principles are apparent in the contents and competencies, in the activities and relationships, in the teachers and the taught, in the facilities and in the spirit which reigns in Marianist educational communities. Those principles devolve into a certain characteristic originality that is difficult to express, a way of seeing reality and of living life, and into the final product of a Marianist educational work. This vision of the human person remains poorly identified, formulated, articulated and disseminated. *There is a latent anthropology in our lives that we are not always capable of expressing with sufficient clarity.* A greater precision is needed in the presentation of the anthropological principles that orient our educational procedures.

The basis of this reflection is centered in an intuition: Marianist education is animated by *an anthropological vision oriented towards*

arriving at the **truth** that sets us **free to love** and to practice **justice**. In these four words in boldface are concentrated the nucleus, at once simple and profound, of Marianist anthropology. There is revealed to us the human quality of the men and women involved in Marianist education. The substratum underpinned by those four elements is converted into the profile of the human person which is proposed and cultivated at all levels of Marianist education. This profile of the person is best defined by the six “c’s”: *conscious-ness, competence, compassion, community-orientation, citizenship and creyente [believing]*. It is a profile which, in turn, we consider to be an opportunity to go beyond what our world now offers: profound inequalities and increasing marginalization; uncertainty in its search for meaning; fragility affecting persons, social institutions and the planet itself; provocative individualism that hinders living together and collaboration. The individual person is beset by fear, and more now than ever before, needs hope. Only from this two-fold perspective of fear and hope do we arrive at *educational thinking that we would consider valid for our times, do we arrive at a Marianist humanism which will provide wonderful results for us, do we arrive at the healthy audacity to be complete persons and to accomplish an educational task of high human quality.*

Methodologically we shall follow five steps. We begin by explaining how the Marianist sees and contemplates the human situation. Then we shall analyze the sense of wonder that springs forth from this observation and from which come questions that we shall try to identify. Third, we shall describe the response to those questions. In the fourth step we shall

attend to the development of the Marianist response, describing the Marianist anthropological and educational enterprise, which is a way of life. In the last step we shall

specify and describe what is the outcome and the “product” in the person who embodies the Marianist educator who is faithful to this anthropology.

OBSERVING SO AS TO RAISE THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

1. An in-depth look at the nature of the human person

The Marianist himself opens his eyes, and invites others to do the same, to take an in-depth look at the human person. Among ourselves, we have been very sensitive to this. The fact that the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus’s becoming man, is central in our spirituality has made us very sensitive to the special contribution of anthropology. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in these two centuries of Marianist education there have also been different visions of the human person, sometimes skewed ones, that have entailed serious consequences in our educational processes.

The four major traps that can distort the truth about the human person and into which we Marianists have too easily fallen are the following: dichotomies, absolutizing or polarizations,

distortions and reductionism. Our humanity is right there, where we can see, hear, feel, speak to, touch, love, hate, analyze, study it. The Marianist educator is human. The human condition is embodied in men and women of flesh and bones, of different ages, various races, distinct cultures. This allows us to see clearly its problems and its marvelous accomplishments, its mysteries and its rich insights. Our great challenge is to provide it with an adequate vision.

Here we shall present the most common distortions of truth, so that they can be avoided:

- *Dichotomies or dualism* in thinking about and educating the person

For some, the person is like a house with different floors and compartments that are at times disconnected: the body, the soul and the spirit; the spiritual life and the “world”; the eternal and the temporal; the affective and the intellectual. Within the human person these are elements or aspects which must be distinguished, but not separated, and even less so, opposed to one another; they must be integrated.

The separation between the interior and the exterior has been exaggerated. In our tradition we affirm that *the essential is the interior*, but that profound understanding can be joined to a sociopolitical commitment that must not be lacking in Marianist education. The Marianists’ way of understanding the human person today encompasses

both “the” interior and “the” exterior. “The interior is the essential” that gives meaning, depth, inspiration and spirit. But it is not isolated; it animates the exterior. The exterior is what gives form, expression and implementation to the interior; it is the wineskin that receives the wine. Depth in both thinking and feeling is characteristic of Marianist education.

There are many dichotomies that have been overcome in our current Marianist anthropology: soul-body, the earthly and the heavenly, prayer and life, contemplation and action, faith and justice, sacred and profane history, the temporal and the eternal, instinctive drives and spiritual aspirations, blind affective impulses and clear ideas, hidden motivations and rationalized motives, behaviors conditioned by older ways and projects responsibly and freely chosen. It is the insight into the unique dynamism that courses through the person and from which flows a strong vitality characterized by creativity that has contributed to overcoming the dichotomies.

- *Absolutizing of* one element which in itself is very valid but which does not correspond to the whole under consideration

Policy is very important; so is the academic. In Marianist education we have sometimes been inflexible about grading, intellectual performance or sports. Absolutizing things can create animosities and frequently tends to distort the truth about a human being. With some fre-

quency choice has been confused with absolutism. They are, nevertheless, two different things. It is good to stress the quality of the intellectual, but without forgetting the affective; sports are very important, but we should not forget the great value of art. Absolutizing industrial production and technical resources has brought about a serious deterioration in nature. Marianist education must not neglect ecological sensitivity.

- *Distortions* of the image of the human person to the point of making it unrecognizable

If these distortions define the person, we convert him into such an angel that we can't recognize him as belonging to our human race. On the other hand, if we see only the roots that tie him into the soil and the earth from which he comes, he can also appear unknown to us, since the human person has a certain freedom from subjection to time and place. He needs this freedom in order to move into the past or into the future, to go higher or lower. In the human person a part is not the whole. If this distortion happens, he can be changed into a little monster. That is what happens when some people exaggerate the values of money or power, of imagination or sex, of academic performance or sports.

- *Reductionism* in the truth about the person in our education

Some important elements have been suppressed. Formation in faith or formation in justice and social action has been neglected at certain times in Marianist education.

Affectivity has been noticeably absent in some educational undertakings. In other cases creative and artistic capacities were dispensed with; the person was limited to the rational and the technical. His skills were never matured into creative expression. For some educators, a profound union with God seemed dehumanizing. As a result, the religious dimension was reduced or rejected and everything was oriented towards ever narrower objectives: work, production and consumption. Teaching in order to educate and educating in order to form in faith shape the horizon of a integrated education that avoids reductionism.¹

2. A contemplation of what is seen

Marianist education leads us into the heart of the human person. When we take a profound look we are filled with admiration as we contemplate the greatness of the human person. And so Marianist education teaches one to discover the awesome reality that exists in the person and to wonder at it. We will look at three scenarios that give orientation to our educational task.

- The first scenario is a sculpture and corresponds to one of the entrances of the Romanesque or Gothic churches or monasteries that Father Chaminade might have been able to contemplate.

¹ Cf. Ignacio Otaño, *Enseñar para educar, el espíritu marianista en la educación* (Madrid: Servicios de Publicaciones Marianistas [SPM], 2000).

It is centered upon a large figure: the image of the Savior, the *Pantokrator*. To the two sides are seen the representation of the Last Judgment: one side corresponds to hell and the other to heaven. In the surrounding areas are scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary. There is no doubt about the double focus of this catechism in stone: that of God the judge and that of the human person, God's creature and servant, who will be judged by him. The human person is very submissive and dwarfed.

- The second scenario we find in the Cathedral of Orvieto (Italy).

It is a stunning fresco painted by Luca Signorelli. It also represents the Last Judgment and has the same structure. Jesus presides over the Last Judgment. But both the condemned and the saved are standing upright, with magnificent bodies. The angels and the demons that accompany them are personages well-known in the artist's time. The human person is not some little submissive thing; he is dignified, he is a "lord." We have passed from a medieval to a Renaissance perspective. The human person is liberated and begins to dominate the universe.

- Now let's look at the third scenario, which has been behind much of the *modus operandi* of the Marianists. It is malleable and contemporary.

It corresponds to a given moment of the Second Vatican Council, when *Gaudium et spes*, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, was being worked on. What

scene do we have before us? Following the same architectural metaphor, everything is structured in two parts: that of truth and that of liberty, the whole scene crowned with love. The first 22 sections of the document lead us to contemplate a new canvas. The text is like a meditation on St. Ignatius's "Principle and Foundation." It is written with an invaluable theological and cultural background about the human person. We find in it a formidable synthesis of medieval and humanist anthropology, from the holy Fathers and the Bible, from contemporary theology and the human sciences. Henceforth the human person will serve God and other people not so much in renunciation as in positive choices, not in distancing himself from the real world but in being present in the midst of its joys and sorrows. The seed of this new vision is freedom dedicated to the service of love, a freedom lived radically for God.

The Marianist educator thirsts for fullness and transcendence. If we go down into his field of action, we see a need to learn, to grow, to seek excellence, to communicate and multiply life. Delors has summarized it all in four pillars: learning to know, to do, to live together and to be.² All of this gives a powerful and continuous incentive to the human person for new actions, conquests, searches and initiatives. In this scenario, which depicts a Marianist educational work, the educator feels what Saint Augustine said: "our heart is

² UNESCO, *Learning the Treasure Within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*, prepared by Jacques Delors et al. (Paris: 1996), 20-22.

not satisfied until it rests in God.” Our world, however, offers so many novelties that one is able to be content for a long time with things that are inferior to himself. One might say *that in Marianist education one is “condemned” to always look for something new, something different, something better; transcendence is never lacking.* This seed is planted and cultivated in Marianist education, but to cultivate it well one must use the rich nutrients of Marianist pedagogy. One starts out with the conviction that each person has a reserve of resources that, when tapped into, produces results, and even an attitude that, once adopted, generates a response.

|| THE BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HUMAN PERSON

We must learn to see both the wretchedness and the grandeur of man. It is inevitable that explicit questioning about the identity of the human person be raised in Marianist education. Whoever comes to take part in this educational endeavor must be asked about his vision of the human person. The question is both old and new; it is posed to the wise, to the aged and to the young, to the healthy and to the infirm, to the master and the student. It is born of wonder as well as of doubt. The exact and precise question is not *what* the human person is, but *who* is the human person, because above all he is a *who*, not a *what*.

This is a question we find repeated in the Bible many times. The Psalmist, with his insight into the greatness of the human

person, raised his voice to heaven and said to God: "...what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals [sons of man] that you care for them?" (Ps 8:4 *NRSV*). Sometimes the questioning comes from the fragility of the human being, who is like a breath (Ps 144:3-4 *NRSV*). Ben Sira asks forcefully: "What are human beings, and of what use are they? What is good in them, and what is evil? The number of days in their lives is great if they reach one hundred years. Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand, so are a few years among the days of eternity" (Sir 18:8-10 *NRSV*).

To this great question, a Marianist school has to respond explicitly: in the content to be learned, in the attitudes to be developed and in the competencies that need to be acquired.

This question has been asked again and again over the course of the centuries. Pascal addressed it and answered: "What is the human person in nature? Nothing compared to infinity. All with respect to nothing. An intermediary between the nothing and the all." The Second Vatican Council recognizes that the human person raises questions about his destiny and his nature (*GS* 3) and gives an ample reply that situates the human being between paradox and mystery (*GS* 10). It recognizes that there are many uncertainties about him and, because of this, sees him as feeling insecure (*GS* 12), but also filled with greatness.

We Marianists have begun to raise and respond to the questions about the human person, especially since Vatican Council

II. We have some questions that perplex us. We have never avoided them, but we have not always formulated them for ourselves with sufficient precision. Perhaps this has been so because we have given many different responses, or because of the discomfort that the real answers produce, or because we don't want to hear them because they are demanding and might call us to approach life differently. Perhaps our formulations lack precision simply because our rhythm of life does not offer sufficient space for wonderment and questioning.

1. What does the Marianist ask about the human being?

The Marianist teacher asks about what is happening from day to day: what is going on within himself, in his surroundings and in other human beings. He takes his questions to the classroom. He can see that the same questions shape the lifestyles both of those who enjoy being well off and of those who are engaged in the struggle against sufferings and contradictions. It is evident that the human person is a special being. Among the questions that most concern him, some have to do with what he lacks and others with what he needs. The Second Vatican Council made a list:

Nevertheless, in the face of the modern development of the world, the number constantly swells of the people who raise the most basic questions or recognize them with a new sharpness: what is man? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress? What purpose have these victories purchased at so high a cost?

*What can man offer to society, what can he expect from it?
What follows this earthly life? (GS 10).*

These words, still prophetic even after more than fifty years, continue to echo in Marianist schools and have confirmed that “the truth we owe to the human person is, above all, the truth about himself” (John Paul II). These words have led, above all, to the formulation of these six questions, which cannot be lacking from the content of our teaching materials and which introduce us into the grand themes of the Marianist anthropology.³

- The question about life

Marianist education is about life. It is concerned with the experience of life: birth, growth, bearing fruit. The educator understands that he lives in a family and that there he has received his life. He experiences fear in the face of death, and asks why it has to happen, since he was created to live. He enjoys life. Life is worth living. He wishes that it might not come to an end and that death be more a moment in his history than his final end and the negation of all that he is. He never stops asking himself about the meaning of his human existence.⁴ He

³ Cf. Eric Troncoso Mejía and Ana Repetto Masini, *Curriculum centrado en la persona: el milagro de creer en las capacidades del niño* [Person-centered curriculum: the miracle of believing in the child’s capacities] in Colección perspectivas de nuestro tiempo, (Santiago de Chile: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1999).

⁴ Cf. Viktor Frankl, *El hombre en busca del sentido* 9th ed. (Barcelona: Herder, 1988).

is astonished because he is able to give life, care for it and maintain it. He stands before it with the amazement that mystery and the unknown bring; he marvels even more when he says “He (Christ) is the life,” “You are truth” and “I am the life,” as suggested by Raimon Pannikar. We are temporal but we know that we are more than that; we are eternal. This dimension was well developed by Father Chaminade, who led us to revive faith in the affirmation, “I believe in life everlasting.” We are situated in space, but we are something more; we are spiritual. Because we have a passion for life, we take stands against war and the death penalty, against terrorism and alcohol abuse.

■ The question about love

The human person knows that he has physical needs he must attend to. To ignore them may cost him his life. But there are also other psychic needs that must also be satisfied, for if neglected they create problems. The human being is made to love and to be loved. Nevertheless, we see that often his love is immature and directed towards emptiness and loneliness. From this comes the big question: why does the human person have such an insatiable thirst for love? Why is it so difficult to love, even to the point where it actually has to become an art? For Marianist education, we know that we have to educate in love, in affection; we have to educate to care for the family and the community spirit, to create a family environment. All this is cultivated in a Marianist school.

■ The question of happiness

Together we educate to make the person happy. There is nothing that the human person seeks with more passion during his entire life than happiness, understood as an experience of well-being, pleasure and peace. Our very being rebels against suffering, while it seeks tranquility and pleasure. Each human person, however, undertakes the pursuit of happiness in a different way. And at times he makes mistakes. This need for happiness is rooted in the depths of his heart. We go through the hard experience of losing happiness that we have already achieved. It is evident that pleasure is not the definitive answer to the search for happiness. Let's repeat the question: whence comes the hunger for happiness? In Marianist education, happiness is sought in play, rest, meetings, work well done, reaching a set of goals. We educate for joy and we enjoy educating.

■ The question of evil

To educate is to teach what is not known, to form in well-being and in goodness. But another big human question that touches our optimistic mood as Marianist educators is the existence of evil and suffering, of difficulty and failure, of fear and punishment. While we consider ourselves free of evil we dare not even mention it; when we see it in others around us, we begin to feel ourselves its victims. If we suffer it ourselves, we cry aloud. We know that sooner or later pain will come to catch up with us.

We can do little to avoid it or to eliminate it. The question is persistent: why is there evil in this world? Why does it also afflict me? But the question asked in Marianist education is at a higher level of responsibility: how can society be transformed so as to avoid the causes of pain? What are the transformations needed to reduce the pain that comes from poverty, injustice, oppression or infirmity?

■ Questions about how to live together when we are different

The individual aspires to live in a group and to join groups. When this experience is entered into, it is not uncommon that obstacles arise. Even worse, it frequently happens that a given situation arises in which life together – be it that of a couple, a permanent or temporary religious group, or a community – becomes not only difficult but even impossible. Thus come conflict, separation and exclusion, and in some cases war. It is not rare that someone, who had promised fidelity, sometimes even until death, asks to leave the group. In some cases one discovers that that faithfulness can only be achieved by grace. But in any case there remains the big question: why does fidelity/faithfulness cost so much? How can it be integrated with sincerity? In accepting diversity, why is fellowship so difficult? In Marianist education quality and excellence are cultivated, but also inclusion. We don't look for only the best to enter into Marianist schools. Those who do enter become the best. The best need to know how to live with what is different. In Marianist education, as our tradition reminds us, “do not reject as bad what is not entirely good.”

- Questions about the great forces within ourselves

We all feel an impulse towards fruitfulness, growth, liberation and the overcoming of obstacles. For this we are born and we give birth; we ourselves grow and we help others to grow. *In our educational tradition there is a strong emphasis on stimulating growth and achieving good outcomes.* Thus we increase our capacity for development. The corresponding invitation to share what I am and what I have is not lacking; growth is for giving and not for accumulating. Why would a human person not wish to be fair and generous?

The contemporary human person frequently does not dare to confront the deepest questions that he carries in his heart. Distracted and entertained by so many superficial claims, almost always pulled outward, with no time to find his own self, he is not always capable of listening to the longings and yearnings that arise within. In Marianist education we need the courage to pose the fundamental questions about our existence and to condition ourselves towards arriving at an answer. One of the conditions that must be stressed is the spirit of silence and, obviously, the confidence and capacity to accept the truth.

2. An urgent response needed

In a Marianist educational work, we have to offer answers to these great questions. At times, we tend to avoid these questions, and above all the question touching the human person. On the other hand, humanity is going through a new chapter

in its history. It is necessary to try to describe the new situation, not an easy task. There are many persons who walk in darkness without looking for the truth about themselves, since that would bring with it the necessity of facing up to the consequences of such introspection. And so it is necessary to teach about the human person. To take up anthropology is to speak of the human being with objectivity and clarity.

This type of reflection and the answers it seeks are urgently needed in our times. *We Marianists share with today's men and women an authentic crisis in our human identity.* These great questions have become more acute and have actually multiplied due to bioethics, the debate over euthanasia, the cybernetic culture, the inter-religious dialogue, the mobility of persons, the social communications media, the digital culture. To be a human person today is to be all things--which one cannot be. There are incarnations and embodiments of humanity that come near to bestiality as well as those that lock themselves into a disorienting angelism. This crisis demands a response. To be a person is to be somebody, to have rights and to fulfill one's obligations. But there is no doubt that some human beings are deprived of their rights and of what is indispensable to their human condition; on occasion their obligations are also forgotten. They end up being less than a human person; they become "non-human."

It is difficult to identify what is behind the words "human person," but easy to understand the corrosive effect which, as a result of some ideologies, is exerted on the new model of the person that the beginning of the new millennium seems

to embody. *We have all had the experience, day in and day out, of being deeply involved in the global market, buying and selling, being bought and sold.* There are Marianist educational programs that need more clarity about this situation. Those programs must stress more strongly and more accurately the alternatives they offer in the face of this brutal environment.

Perhaps one of the most obvious weaknesses of present-day civilization lies in an inadequate view of man. Without doubt, our age is the one in which man has been most written and spoken of, the age of the forms of humanism and the age of anthropocentrism. Nevertheless it is paradoxically also the age of man's deepest anxiety about his identity and his destiny, the age of man's abasement to previously unsuspected levels, the age of human values trampled on as never before (John Paul II, "Address to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate," Puebla, Mexico, January 28, 1979, §14).

There is no doubt that we need to keep discerning, renouncing and choosing. But what choices are there in this situation for one's own life? They are inspired by our vision of the person. It is common knowledge that the dignity of the human person is being diminished in value, in clarity and lucidity. *Just for that reason, to propose a Marianist option is to promote a vocation and, above all, a clearly defined, well-articulated and integrated identity of the human.* One must realize that individualism is cruel because it excludes group identity and the dimension of community. It rejects a common vision of the human person. In any event, what is clear is that no one has been created by

God just to be a consumer or an oppressed worker, to be bought or sold in the marketplace like a slave, to be abused sexually or to live in destitution. To address these concerns, we must present the true sense and significance of being human.

Finally, *being Marianist is one way of being a person*. It is a unique way. It is rooted in a charism and a spirituality, through which the person's life is organized and his destiny clearly understood. In fact, every human being comes to discover his own proper identity in responding to God's call to share his life with Him. The Marianist educator is summoned to give a particularly radical response to this call.

But we can't stop with merely beautiful definitions. We need something more in order to be able to follow this path. We must construct for ourselves the framework necessary for sustaining this identity. Only in that way *can we be a proactive countercultural alternative for a vision of the human person*. Thus can we ourselves develop and grow. Anthropology is not merely scientific theory; it is the journey of mankind that we must be able and willing to embody in our day-to-day existence.

3. Whence comes this response?

The human person is not merely a problem to be solved.⁵ He is a mystery that provokes wonder in us, but also questions that

⁵ Cf. Joseph Gevaert, *El problema del hombre* [The problem of man] in *Lux Mundi* 48. (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1991).

demand a response. In a way there is something of a contradiction here that we are incapable of solving merely with our own reasoning. Nevertheless, each of us has a certain response to the question about being human. *We Marianists have one; it serves as the substratum for all our educational work and we invite others to develop their own.*⁶

As we have already noted, Father Chaminade left us no treatise on anthropology. Nor has there been written any synthesis of the best anthropological elements in the Marianist tradition. We have one manuscript entitled “La concepción antropológica del P. Guillermo J. Chaminade” [William J. Chaminade’s anthropological understanding]. It is the licentiate thesis of J.M. Rueda Calero,⁷ a good attempt to explain and treat in an organized form the anthropological understanding of the Founder. Although I will not be quoting from it, neither am I ignoring it in this work, since I will be offering *some elements directed, above all, towards orienting educational work*. There is also a book in the collection *Modern Theology and Marianist Spirituality* written by Hugh Bihl and focused on this theme.⁸ For myself, in my book *Un charisma hecho cultura* [A charism become a culture] I offer some observations that we might

⁶ Cf. Italo Gastaldi, *El hombre, un misterio: aproximaciones filosófico-teológicas* [Man, a mystery: philosophico-theological approaches]. 6th ed. Quito: Ediciones Don Bosco: 1999, pp. 22-36.

⁷ Cf. “La concepción antropológica del P. Guillermo J. Chaminade” (licentiate thesis, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 2010).

⁸ *The Marianist Person at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century*. *Modern Theology and Marianist Spirituality* 5 (Madrid: Amministrazione Generale Società di Maria, 2001).

consider a Marianist cultural anthropology.⁹ Here we will try to make a sketch of this vision of the person. Starting from that, we can *establish a global educational model, coming out of a common inspiration, but which should not be confused with a list of common norms* that would be impossible to apply in different situations.

Of course, I know that this is not the “official” vision of the Marianist Family, nor do I pretend that it should be so considered. Furthermore, I believe that it is not possible to have an official interpretation. This vision is something learned in this Family, by which we ourselves live and with which we help others to live. It is consistent with our documents and our tradition. Several of the elements of this response correspond to the “what is unspoken,” but felt and lived by many; other elements are more difficult to identify. I know that it is not universal, but no anthropology is, because enculturation weighs upon and influences both the formulation of a vision of the human person and human experience. Nonetheless, a good formulation will be useful in a French or Japanese, a Congolese or Colombian school.

This response will be a key to understanding the whole of Marianist life. From the Church we can learn, through reading *Gaudium et Spes*, that Vatican Council II was necessary because, in the middle of the last century, the church did not understand who the human person was or in what condition

⁹ *Un carisma hecho cultura* (Madrid: SPM, 2009).

that person stood, towards whom her message was supposed to be directed. The Church did not know what to say, because she did not know to whom she was speaking. Without adequately identifying the receivers, she could not express the message in her usual traditional categories.

This Marianist vision and response come from a perspective that is partly directed to the past, partly appropriate to the present and partly oriented towards the future. It is a vision that has served us quite well and which deserves our efforts at seeking to employ it in our day-to-day educational work. *It must be present in the classroom and not missing from the school-yard.* This response corresponds to a great aspiration that is found in the Marianist educator, from the kindergarten to the university post-graduate level. Educational and formative work, the accompaniment of spiritual journeys, and the animation of groups will be much aided by the formulation of this understanding of the human person. These on-going tasks are important for the man in the street, for the teacher, the believer and for anyone who has to both delineate and embody a model of person, be it for himself or for those whom he wishes to help in their formation. We all need to know the truth about the human person.

To achieve this goal the divine must be well integrated with the human. These are elements which have to be fitted to each other like a button with a button-hole. It has to be like that, since we Marianist educators seek through the integrity of our educational policy to humanize the divine and to divinize the

human. Of course, this Marianist response takes its uniqueness from the place where it was developed, from the conditions under which it was born, from its capacity to integrate and add on rather than subtracting or dividing.

Being man - Being woman

Those conditions of the birth of this Marianist response contribute important elements to one's being a person. In Marianist education we have attempted to give place in our thinking and in our life-style to complementary feminine-masculine dimensions, that we might walk with both feet and breathe with both lungs. We have tried to overcome the patriarchal and *machismo* idea of being human. We have not always succeeded; at times we have remained stuck in holding power and control, in a tendency to divide and separate the intellectual from the affective, the efficient from the gratuitous. In our Marianist anthropology, we educate to integrate these two dimensions of the human being; that is why co-education has been promoted. We educate for living together, for the interaction and mutual dependence of man and woman.

Being Christian

Being Christian means that in Marianist educational institutions Jesus is seen as the point of reference for a way of being human. We have the conviction that Christ is the key to the mystery of the human. The person who wishes

to understand himself in depth has to draw near to Christ. That is the message that Mary gives to the Marianist educator. Since Christ became a human person and died and rose again, the human person cannot be born or die, work or contemplate, suffer or rejoice in an authentic manner without reference to Christ. The human person is a “Christophany” [a manifestation of Christ]. Only in Christ is the true greatness of the human person revealed, and only in him can one’s innermost self be fully known. For those attending a Marianist school, Christ becomes a “thou” [cf. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*]. “...[In Christ] were created all things,... everything visible and everything invisible ... all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16 *NJB*). The principal elements of this anthropology which we are proposing come from the message and the person of Jesus: *he is the human person par excellence*. The Church, “as an expert in humanity,” has gathered up all these elements: “The Church possesses the truth about the human person” (John Paul II). She does not have the entire truth, but a large part of it. The same is true when she takes up the newness of Jesus Christ. Into the Greco-Roman world “... He came, light and clothed in an aura, emphatically human, deliberately provincial, Galilean, and at that moment gods and nations ceased to be and [the human person] came into being...” (Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*).¹⁰

¹⁰ Cited in Luis Ladaria, *Antropología teológica*. (Roma: Universidad gregoriana, 1995). [English translation from <http://rainquotes.blogspot.it/2008/06/dr-zhivago-quotes.html>].

For a Marianist the gospel provides the measure of what is most authentically human. So for us as Marianists the definition of the person derives also from our interpersonal relationship with Jesus and Mary. They show us a human path towards personal fulfillment. *Without them, for me the human person is a question without answer and an impossible project.* I am always impressed by the text of Philippians 2:1-11 in which is explained the path followed by Jesus to become a human person. Nothing human makes sense without Jesus. He is the paradigm for every person. Mary has always been the feminine dimension that permits the Marianist to attain his masculine human personhood, including interiority, memory, fraternity, fruitfulness, presence, faith.

Being Marianist

Being Marianist is an element that brings a vision in which a specific charism, a spirituality, a special way of seeing and living the faith contribute a great deal to the concept of the person. It introduces a particular way of acting in the face of the great dynamics within the human person, such as power, possession, knowledge, sexuality. Life can be difficult with these strong tendencies for the very reason that they sometimes enslave, divide or alienate us. Marianist life offers a path towards integration. Even more, *the Marianist vocation can shed light upon a special story of being human.* The Marianist approaches that which normally gives identity to the human being in our world: happiness, fidelity and fruitfulness. In a society in which identity is so fragile and

so little guaranteed, we leave behind what many people seek so anxiously and laboriously as the normal constituents of their identity. And we seek a different reality.¹¹

Western at its birth and later global

The human sciences in the Western world have made a valuable contribution to the elaboration of a vision of what it means to be a human person and of its effective realization in history. It was here that the Marianist way of being a person was forged. Little by little this vision found itself at home in very different parts of the world. There began to appear views or focal points that enrich and complement the various aspects of the overall Marianist vision. Since it was born in Europe and in France, that vision is a paradigm in which the demands for liberty and individual subjective self-fulfillment are highly valued, but which demands needed at times to be corrected in their excessive libertarian tendency by a commitment to justice and the socio-political dimensions of everyday life and faith. Father Chaminade was native to this part of the world and lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. For that reason, the study of J.M. Rueda, to which I have referred, reminds us that Chaminade presented the image of the human being defended by the theological tradition of his time which, as Psalm 8 suggests, binds man to God so that without God man cannot be understood. *His “anthropological” reflection is located between a “theonomous” vision and an autonomous vi-*

11 Cf. Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*.

sion, between God and liberty, equality and fraternity. But with the arrival of the 21st century, it is the planet-wide character, a global solidarity, that has come to the fore. In this situation, the Marianist human condition needs to be newly described. In order to live together in a single world community, we need to prepare the new generations. In that community there must be no racism, xenophobia or rejection; in it we must live as citizens of the world.

Postmodern

In our current historical and socio-cultural period there is a concrete embodiment of the image of the human person, in which more value is placed on the affective and less on reason. It is, however, not easy to describe the post-modern human person that is part of our own make-up. But we can see that that image entails important changes and new dimensions. This postmodern human person does not want long-term commitments, but prefers that they be local and temporary; he intuits rather than reasons; he is into television and computers; he prefers creativity to efficiency; feels at ease with globalization; is an indiscriminate consumer. He is passionately attracted to color and sound, companionship and leisure, enjoyment and sharing. Yet he finds himself in the midst of a society which demands results and entry into competition, and which sometimes leaves no alternative to doing so, while abandoning any thought of generosity and sharing. This culture proposes and imposes a manner of thinking and a particular life-style as well. In

both, the acceleration and the speed of the technological world play an important role. This rapidity of change is both valued and disliked since, as Charlie Chaplin said of his own time, as we can say today, "we think too much but feel too little." Marianist education, as has been pointed out in *Characteristics of Marianist Education*, assumes changes and prepares for changing.¹²

I have to recognize that these are the "trademarks" and the "reference points" for the Marianist vision of the human person. I can see their presence in our Marianist educational work. It is important to give them the space they deserve, but none of them should be considered as sole or exclusive. At the same time none of them can be dispensed with.

||| A RESPONSE THAT LEADS TO A PROGRAM

The reflections focused on the response about the human person we will later convert into a program to be undertaken, because to educate is to form. To accomplish this, attention needs be given to the various ways in which we approach being human. These ways are: as *an intuition*, i.e., like a spontaneous reaction; as *a vision*, in the way Jesus saw it, which points out the goal we wish to attain; as *a description*, which means using the appropriate

¹² Cf. Zigmunt Bauman, *Retos de la educación en la modernidad líquida* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2008).

adjectives, which distinguish and qualify; as *a definition*, finding the appropriate noun and pointing out the place the human being should occupy in the universe, in our world.

Only when these steps have been taken will we be able to see and to present the human being, first and foremost in the context of education, as a project, as an endeavor, because becoming a human person is a task that we assign to our own selves. For a Marianist, to educate is to embody the fullness of humanity within himself.

1. As an intuition

In his spontaneous reflections, the Marianist encounters in the human person a longing for fullness and life, for happiness and for the infinite, for truth and beauty – a longing that leads, as we have seen, to wonder, surprise, sudden understanding.¹³ To be human is to be a mystery filled with possibilities. In this marvelous being there are desires to compete and to excel that can be joined with wanting to share and grow together with others. Into this primordial Marianist insight enters also Machado's good advice: the healthy human being strives to arrive at his goals not just first and alone, but on time and in good company. He shares St. Irenaeus's wonder at the human person: "The glory of the human person is God; but the receptacle of all God's action, of his wisdom, of his power, is the human person" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III,20,2).

¹³ "Yet you have made him little less than a god...." (Ps 8:5 *NJB*).

This is the most common starting point for Marianists in their approach to the human being. But this is not the primary intuition of all the groups of humankind nor even in the Church. There are those who see in the human being an enemy, someone with bad intentions, one who is sick, misguided or disabled; from the very moment he enters into the group, they offer no option of acting freely and they allow no room for moving forward responsibly.

2. As a vision

Christ had a vision of the human person, a vision that came out of his own experience of his humanity, of being the Incarnate Word, the Savior, a human person as risen and filled with the Spirit. To have this same vision of being human is to advance in originality and passion; it is to enter into a great dream and a sublime idea. Jesus remembers his status as a human being and offers it to us under the following conditions:

- Created, formed

For Jesus, the human person is made by God; we are the work of his hands. His image, his imprint, his likeness have been engraved upon us. We are God's story. He has *formed* us to his own image and likeness (GS 12 and 72). For that reason we have a great longing for transcendence; that is why we are God-seekers. From this point onward, the direction of anthropology, if it is authentic, changes, so that it becomes theological at the same time that theology

becomes anthropological. The question about the human person is no less theological than the God question. Christ is the true image of the created human person. Here is born authentic freedom and to that image the human person returns when freed from the oppressions that rise up to encounter him. Thus, the Marianist educator, when he begins speaking of man in a biology class, ends up by speaking of God, and when he begins speaking of God in catechism class he ends up speaking about man.

I am a creature because all that I have I have received. To adequately give thanks for this, the only way to do it is to enlarge the gift and share it. Thus it is obvious that in being creatures we are also creators. When I think about being a creature I am thinking and putting myself where I am in reality; I take off my shoes and bow down to earth. And I do it because I am free. Because we are creatures, St. Ignatius reminds us, we should serve God, but as free beings we have to choose whether we will do it or not. If we do it, we acquire the right and the duty to be happy.

■ Fallen, *deformed*

The human person turns away from God and in doing so “de-forms” himself, loses the form that God had given him, obscures his image. He adores idols, “he eats of the forbidden fruit.” Thus he breaks the principal connection that subjects the human person to the Father’s loving rule. He falls into hatred, despair, rejection, death and destruction. He is incapacitated for communion, truth and freedom.

Thus sprout all kinds of slaveries. Thus the human person experiences the reality of weakness and humiliation, and is brought back down to his own diminutive self, fragmented and divided. At the root of this situation there is something very concrete. We want to be like God and that we can't be. That illusory step happened once and it continues to happen. And it has its own modern version of which the sociologist Peter Berger reminds us in his book, *A Rumor of Angels*. God has disappeared from the horizon; the human person has taken up position front and center and wishes to be the lord of the universe. The step that is taken today aims at freeing the human person from the gods and religions. It is a step that leads to the human person denying his reality as a creature.

Just at that moment there emerge the rumors of redemption. In Marianist education they show up in the reaction against the already intolerable human situation, in the cry of the poor for freedom, in the protest against an evil prolonged through history that seems invincible. In a Marianist school we must carefully cultivate both the consciousness of sin and the practice of reconciliation with oneself, with others, with the Lord. So there must be no lack of celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation no lack of education about pardon given and received.

- Recreated, redeemed, re-formed

The human person is totally destitute; he needs redemption. He is a sinner and acts like a sinner. Through the

action of Christ, the Lord, the human being recovers the lost image of the Divine. He is marvelously redeemed. Where sin abounded, grace superabounds. He is saved, and salvation for him consists in nature and grace forming a harmony so that the person is “*re-formed,*” *saved.* Through the mystery of the cross the human person takes hold of his limits, his fears, his impulses and obsessions, his inability to communicate. He overcomes his egoism. For this to happen his profound desire for communion must be nourished and the obstacles he faces must be overcome through a healthy asceticism. The Marianists live this experience in the company of Mary, which helps them to die in order to live. But this dimension reminds us that in a Marianist school discipline is indispensable, as are also efforts at overcoming difficulties.

■ Risen: being human for others, transformed

The risen human person manifest in Jesus Christ is the new human person, in whom life attains its fullness insofar as it is for-others. It is the human person “transformed.” He takes on the form of one who has conquered death and is destined for heaven. For the person who lives this experience in depth, Christ takes up residence in the most profound center of his being and from that moment mediates the discovery of the self as a person risen to a new life. In fact, the Marianist is not threatened by death, but anticipates resurrection. Jesus does not lead to death; he announces and leads us to a resurrected life, as we see constantly in the Gospel. The risen Christ is the

image that needs to be seen more in a Marianist school, and Easter joy should be the fundamental dimension of living the faith. Thus the Marianist educational strategy is always formulated at all levels from signs of vitality and not from those of weakness or sterility. Seeing the signs, naming them, articulating them and getting off to a new start from them is a fundamental institutional criterion in Marianist education.¹⁴

- Pentecostal-spiritual: the human person for all, “informed”

The human person moved by the Spirit of Christ adapts universally to different times and places. Thus he encounters his own most fundamental and deepest self and discovers also the same aspirations that other people have. In them and in himself, when he delves down to that place where we are all basically the same, he encounters the desire for love, for truth and for freedom. Thus he becomes the man *for all*. Like the Risen Jesus, he is neither barbarian, nor Greek, nor Jew. Christ made the human person a citizen of the world. “In Christ are joined man and woman, earth and paradise, the world and heaven, sense objects with abstract ideas, created nature with the Uncreated.” (Maximus the Confessor) In Marianist education the person gains a sense of worldwide citizenship and is prepared for the interchange and openness needed to live in a globalized world like ours.

¹⁴ Cf. Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978).

3. As a description

Let's examine the terms that describe the place of the human being in relation to the rest of the universe.

- Adult: to be free

The human person has been created free by God so that he might move responsibly towards the good, spontaneously and freely, without compulsion or imposition. But from that condition, he has the possibility of descending to the level of the oppressed. At that point he loses the freedom and capacity to do what is good. The anthropology of liberation describes very well the free human being and the oppressed. It also shows the political, social, cultural and spiritual path that leads “from” oppression “to” freedom, the path of conversion into a liberated creature. The human being is free and shares in the creative activity of God. But let's not forget that it is not appropriate to be excessively optimistic about the summons to freedom. Salvation comes to us only when we opt for liberty, but it costs us to do so because our mind easily loses the direction towards the good. The Marianist, being above all an educator, knows well that freedom is constantly under threat and therefore he seeks to educate for freedom. One is not born knowing how to be free; one goes to school to learn how.

- Child

Every human being is a child; he has parents. God, who is father and mother, is at the origin of the life that he has received through his parents. For the Christian, God

is *Abba*, the most theologically dense word in the entire New Testament. It means going through life as a child, as someone who has been engendered and who forever maintains a share in the life of his parents. One cannot avoid the experience of being a child. He has the freedom of one who has been conceived through love. An alienated human being is one that does not recognize his filial dependence upon the Father and his filial autonomy in relation to the Father. The anthropology of participation develops this relationship of child/parent. This permits us to say that my life is my father and my mother. It is in just this respect that Christ did not come to teach us doctrine, but that we might have life (Jn 10:10). This dimension calls for an active and significant presence of parents in Marianist educational praxis, as it teaches the students how to be children and, when their time comes, how to be parents. In this process of educating, the maternal action of Mary is very significant.

■ Brother/Sister

The children of one and the same father are brothers and sisters to each other. Only those who recognize their parentage can claim to be and truly be brothers and sisters. The love of God the Father that makes us his children becomes by necessity, in a certain sense, a communion love for others. The anthropology of communion helps us to explain this phenomenon. But sometimes this mutual relationship is broken. The other ceases to be brother/sister and becomes an enemy. The anthropology of com-

munion helps also in reestablishing communion and fraternity. It provides the basis for a communion that becomes the norm against which to see and analyze reality; it provides the moral standards to judge good and evil, and what might be one's choice of lifestyle. The human person recovers identity as brother/sister when working for cooperation, interrelationship, interaction, synergy--short, for communion. This dimension leads him to condemn and avoid any exclusiveness. Furthermore, it leads to working for an inclusive education, one that produces inclusive-minded persons.

Only when the human being is *free can he be transformed into a brother/sister and fraternal liberator of his brothers/sisters*.¹⁵ That is the message that has been taking shape recently in the Marianist world. It is up to us to be active agents of liberation in society and in the Church. We must go beyond the concrete confines of the four walls of the school and come to a commitment about those structures of society through service and promotion of individuals and groups. The process through which the human person passes starts with a freeing of himself "from" and that means from power, from possessions, from knowledge and from pleasure; thus he rediscovers his stature as a free and created person. He frees himself "by" means of grace, "by" means of the cross; thus he becomes an adult

¹⁵ Cf. Benito Forcano, *Educación para la ciudadanía: Una propuesta educativa acorde con una visión humanista cristiana* (Madrid: Nueva utopía, 2008.)

and a new creature. He frees himself “with,” since no one succeeds in doing it alone; he needs to recover his status as brother/sister. Finally, he liberates himself “for,” for entering into communion with those who are our brothers and sisters and with God. The *Puebla Document* of CELAM wonderfully summarizes this entire process:

...freedom always implies that capacity which we all have in principle for giving of ourselves for the purpose of establishing a communion and a sharing that have to be concretized on three inseparable planes: the relationship of the human person with the physical world, as its lord; with other persons as brothers/sisters and with God as his child (Puebla 322).

This magnificent insight comes from Jesus, who always acted out of a fraternal attitude. All of us are his brothers/sisters and he approaches us as a brother. In Marianist education this dimension is reinforced by the presence of Mary, our mother, who certainly wants all of us to be brothers and sisters. Closeness, fraternity, family spirit, all are characteristic of the Marianist educational process.

4. As a definition

To define is to set limits. In this case the limits of the human person are God and the world and, more specifically, the animal world. In between those two, he has a spirit and a body. He is embodied spirit, that body giving individual identity to the human person. With the body he is engaged with the earth and submerged in the corporal world, and with the spirit he is

connected to “divine things.” Even more, the body is like the manifestation of the spirit, like the locale for encountering the person and, of course, like an expression of one’s most sublime feelings. The body with its senses goes beyond the self and experiences a fulfillment in its sexuality insofar as through the latter occurs the climax of personal encounter.

If we ask what makes the person human, we get different answers. Nevertheless, poets and anthropologists, neurophysiologists and philosophers will all answer that what differentiates the human species from all the rest of the animals is its capacity to create and use symbols. But to be a little more precise, anthropology tells us that there are three elements that confer a real and truly human character to our life: abstraction, freedom and giving. The philosopher Xavier Zubiri, a Marianist alumnus, spoke of sentient intelligence, of will tending in a certain direction and affectionate feelings. More simply, we can say that the human person is “the bridge between God and the animal.” So the two banks are God and the animal. In between is found this being which is physical, biological, psychical, cultural, social, historical and religious, all at the same time.

■ God “is” within us

Man is a being who goes beyond himself; he is transcendent. The fully human person infinitely surpasses the merely human person. He is a rumor of God. And he strains towards attaining God; he transcends himself, he

opens up to God and enters into communion with him. He wants to touch God and he does touch God. Alphonse de Lamartine has put it very well poetically: “Limited in his nature, Infinite in his anxieties, the human person is a fallen god who remembers heaven.” Saint Irenaeus says: “We were not made gods from the beginning, but human beings, and gods only at the end.” So true humanization is a divinization. Saint Teresa of Ávila expresses it in one of her poems: “O soul, you have to seek yourself in Me – and you must seek Me within yourself.” No bridge stands without two points of support. Without God’s support, the human person does not stand.

- The animal “is” within us

The person is an animal, and like the animal that he is, he has and is a body. With his body he engages nature, the cosmos, the natural environment of our earth. The human person through his bodily condition is a synthesis of the universe. The Psalmist, full of admiration, sums it up in saying: “Yet you have made him little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and beauty, made him lord of the works of your hands, put all things under his feet” (Ps 8:5-7 *NJB*). In Marianist education one is trained for a healthy life; there is ample time and space given to sports, to rest, to proper nourishment, to care of the body, to ecology.

- An embodied spirit

If besides looking at the two piers of the bridge we look at the bridge itself, we find that the human being is an

embodied spirit. That means that he is both a spirit and a body. It is a spirit that witnesses that we are children of God (Rm 8:16). This divine spirit, when welcomed into our human spirit, confers upon it a power, an incalculable strength, strength for struggling, but above all strength for loving and forgiving. And this spiritual force rests in the soul. It uses the soul's diverse functions to move the human person to turn his heart to God. This spirit, metaphorically speaking, is my life-breath and something as intimate to me as life itself. If the soul is the internal life-principle that moves me, the spirit is my being as born from on high and striving to return on high.

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul reminds us of the three elements of which we are made: "May the God of peace sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Th 5:23 *NRSV*). Church tradition has accepted the three elements, but has stressed particularly our spiritual part and our soul; the body has been downplayed. It has highlighted the expressions of the spirit and neglected those of the body. At times it has highlighted only the "soul" and the mission of the Church was to "save souls." The soul exhausts its entire activity in the interior, in the relationship to God. *GS (Gaudium et Spes)* starts out from a new, more comprehensive anthropology, the anthropology of the faithful since the Council has changed direction. That of the Marianists has also changed.

At the present time, the body is being highlighted and the ensemble of the human sciences reminds us that we do not merely have a body; we are a body. With it we work, we suffer, we think, we love, we pray, we are born and we die. Formerly, this body had to be controlled, tamed; self-denial was indispensable for attaining that mastery. All the activities that had to do with the body – political, social, economic and cultural – were regarded as having little or almost no importance. Today they have recovered their rightful place in our being human. All this means that in Marianist education the full, concrete and real human being is an icon of all reality, a microcosm. This is how we must teach students to deal with their own and others' humanity.

IV | PROPOSING AN ORIGINAL MARIANIST WAY OF EDUCATING AND BEING

The human being has received life, has been made and created by God, who is with us. He has the mission to move forward, to continue the work the Lord has begun in him. There is no doubt that arriving at being a human person means work and concern.

Freedom and responsibility are two inseparable ideas. One cannot demand responsibility from someone who has no freedom. Maintaining this twofold dimension has been a big

challenge to Marianist education in the past and continues to be so today. Of everyone who begins a mission – in this case the mission of being a truly human person – responsibility is demanded:

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD YOUR GOD WHICH I COMMAND YOU THIS DAY, BY LOVING THE LORD YOUR GOD, BY WALKING IN HIS WAYS, AND BY KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS AND HIS STATUTES AND HIS ORDINANCES, THEN YOU SHALL LIVE AND MULTIPLY, AND THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BLESS YOU IN THE LAND WHICH YOU ARE ENTERING TO TAKE POSSESSION OF IT. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess (Dt 30:15-18 RSVCE)

The human being becomes a person through contact with truth, beauty and goodness and through assimilating them responsibly. And all of this is grounded in and defined by love:

Love, and do what you will: whether you hold your peace, through love hold your peace; whether you cry out, through love cry out; whether you correct, through love correct; whether you spare, through love do you spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good (St. Augustine, Homily 7 on the First Epistle of John, 8).

From this source is born God's plan for the human person. When God created us he gave us capacity for truth, beauty and

goodness. This is the undertaking that confronts the person. For the Marianist, to be a human person is to opt for and to promote truth, beauty and goodness. For him, there is no anthropology without ethics, without art or without knowledge. These values sustain Marianist educational praxis.

■ Truth

To seek truth and to put ourselves into contact with what is true is a task and a necessity. We arrive at it with a right mind, which is what we have or can have (1 Cor 2:16). The truth sets us free and gives us a foretaste of the good. In Marianist education one learns to learn, to arrive at the truth, to seek the truth, to speak the truth, and not to copy or cheat.

■ Beauty

The experience of beauty is indispensable for human fulfillment and the transmission of the faith. Without it, we are missing something. With it, all our relationships take on a unique and special quality. In a beautiful work of art, we encounter another human person, its creator, because he put himself forward in it. The Marianist teacher is an artist; he employs creativity and talent so that there be no lack of skillfulness in his work. In turn, likening the Marianist educational task to a work of art is to highlight its most fundamental dimensions. Besides its cleanliness, the Marianist school presents tastefulness. In it, what is ugly is avoided, and one learns to appreciate art and to be an artist. The school educates its students in beauty.

■ Goodness

Doing good does good. Service does a great deal of good. Love and serving go together in authentic human experience. In that way the human person collaborates with the creative act of God. Doing good makes the existence of the human person fruitful (John XXIII). It is here that come together what we say, what we do and what we are in attaining happiness.

Ultimately, this Marianist vision of the human person is paradoxical; it defines us in a way that turns us 180 degrees from that of the society in which we live. As we have already said, *it is an alternative enterprise*. In general, the person is identified with the struggle for the triumph of the strongest, with indiscriminate enjoyment of pleasure, with doing without God or generosity. For us, the Marianist Family appears like an ecosystem that accepts and supports a particular way of being a person, original and marked by doing good. It leaves space for each one's originality and creativity since it is basically a community. It is an environment constituted by reflection, activity, structure and spirit, organization and synergy.

Today there are various approaches to being human that abandon the paths of love, happiness, solidarity and joy. *For us, salvation consists in freedom and truth, justice and love*. The tenderness of God, as well as that of the woman who is Mary and that of so many members of the Marianist Family, opens us up to others as a condition for helping us go beyond

ourselves. The person is an undertaking. His life has meaning insofar as he is capable of setting a goal of fulfillment and undertaking the journey towards reaching it.¹⁶

The educator who enters into our tradition, upon reflection, finds at least some original emphases or characteristics that distinguish the Marianist anthropological paradigm, and feels himself invited to live it. The paradigm originates in a reflection very much centered upon childhood and adolescence, but goes beyond that. It was born and developed in the educational field; *it is, essentially, from educators and for learners*. This paradigm began to take a new direction in the second half of the last century. *We might well speak of a new way of understanding the human person*. The important observation is generally accepted that the cultural changes of the 1960's were for us like a whirlwind. Vatican Council II was looked forward to and well received by the Marianists. The Council allowed us to modify our educational paradigm so as to consolidate it in a way that would be consistent with the Council. In the early days of those changes the phenomena of technology, personalization and secularization were in the air. At the same time the human person was breathing the air of freedom, authenticity, community, the struggle against all that was dehumanizing. From this came the strength to formulate this program.

¹⁶ *Retos de la escuela católica: educar para una sociedad alternativa* (Madrid: Ed. San Pio X [SPX], n.d.).

To have a vision that is in a certain sense original and proper to the human person, *it is necessary to have a key that permits entry into the ensemble of that reality, which we have partially presented in the preceding section.* The Marianists have selected and developed that key and have done so using a way that looks at both the whole and at the various parts of that reality. What's the key? In our case it is *the category of relationship that leads to encounter.*¹⁷ The human person is relationship, communication, dialogue, interchange, interaction. Concisely put, he is encounter and communion. The human person not only has relationships but is relationship, he becomes human through the relationships that occur in an encounter. *Encounter is everything and educating is learning to encounter and, for that to happen, learning to establish relationships.* It is in relationships that one becomes a human person, acquires personal identity, grows and develops. Different relationships give us practice in how to be human beings; they make us human. No one exists as a person if he does not enter into communion with another. We can go even further and, coming out of the great insight of St. John (“God is love”), state that the human person is love and made for love. Love becomes real in the encounter.

- We believe that this category is the most appropriate for a Marianist vision of the human person. In our tradition and reflection the human person has always been “the human person in relationship,” which has inspired our efforts for the personal growth, formation and development of

¹⁷ Arnaiz, *Encontrarse es todo* (Madrid: Propaganda Popular Católica [PPC], 2009).

others. To educate in a Marianist institution is to help one in encountering and to extend this help to each person.

- The encounter is the great challenge to present-day culture. What is overwhelmingly present is individualism and competitiveness. The dynamic of individualism is very strong and frequently ends in self-centeredness. It also tends to impose exclusiveness as a lifestyle standard. The cultural alternative is to create relationships and interrelationships, to establish means of communication, to build bridges and inclusiveness, to multiply harmony and cooperation, to avoid marginalization and inequity.

- To exist for the human being is to exist “with”: with others, with oneself, with

things. So the human being is substantially a being that encounters, that overcomes disagreements and arrives at an encounter that reunites. Here is born intentionality, the mutual reference to “something” beyond self. Here is also born the companionship needed and offered, and thus one arrives at friendship. I am not alone. Everything is suffused with relationships and therefore with humanity. I am fulfilled in the “inter-”: the intercultural, interdependence, intercommunication, interaction, interrelationship.

- These relationships can be argumentative and antagonistic. There may arise disagreement or misunderstanding that can rupture the relationship. When that occurs, it seems as though sin has ruined all our relationships.

Reconciliation reestablishes or improves them and they remain in that way guided and marked by love, freedom, truth and justice.

- In the Marianist's vision, the human person is constituted in the function of encounter and develops through four relationships that are proper to a spirit enfolded in a body and open to the transcendent.

We will analyze them, knowing that here is “the core of relationships” (R. Panikkar) and that they all develop and deepen with quality encounters.

1. Encounter of the human person with himself

The human person is “a-being-with-himself”; he is recollection, recuperation, recovery. Person is the being that says “I.” This relationship is oriented towards knowing how to live in solitude and freedom; how to position oneself well in the face of neediness or necessities. Thus one becomes more of a person and a better person. There is born one's personal vocation that gives orientation to one's life. To be person is to possess my “I” and to reflect that in my motives and desires. In the same sense, I have a private life inaccessible to others unless I decide to make it accessible and open to them. Out of that private life I determine what is valuable and, in a certain sense, I create my values. From within me comes the desire to give of and to surrender myself. We are individuals who can decide whether to enter into relationships or not. We need to care for and cultivate this intimate and personal attention to

relationship. Every human must be made into a person and must actively personalize himself; he needs to find himself and to be with himself. For example, the community must be an active agent in personalizing. But this is only possible if the person himself is truly a member of the community. To isolate oneself is not good; to seek solitude is needed in order to give consistency to communion. Here is where inter-subjectivity breaks down. He who is not capable of finding himself never develops good relationships with others. The Marianist lives and makes a strong plea for silence, as an important resource for assuring quality to the encounter.

The daily life of a school offers many occasions for developing this relationship. Pride, pessimism, egoism, individualism break down that relationship, as does neglect of one's own person, of health, of the body, of the mind, of affectivity. So do lack of responsibility and addictions. In some places Marianist education is oriented towards a personalized education that highlights this dimension.

2. Encounter of the human person with others

The person is more than an individual. As the latter, if he is not well directed, he tends to differentiate and to separate himself from others. Encounter is indispensable. Inter-subjectivity arises from the fact that the human person is “a being from, for and with others.” He can never be reduced to a mere thing. For that reason, we try to enter into the other and we do this through getting to know him in a loving way; by means of

this we discover the wonders we possess in common. In this relationship we include all that helps us in relating to others through dialogue, assistance, listening. Knowing how to think leads to knowing how to speak in order to express oneself. The person is not only communicable, but is communication and communion. It means standing together. The encounter is a fundamental dimension of this relationship marked by reciprocity. We transform ourselves into a bridge that unites persons, that establishes interrelationships between them; that brings them to come together in agreement, to be together and to encounter each other. And in this movement one also reaches the point where the “I” recognizes itself as equal to the Thou.

A Marianist school is an educational community; better yet, it is a community of communities. It is constituted by persons who dialogue in a sociable atmosphere. The authentic experience of our humanity is unitive; we meet and get together. This relationship is broken down by forgetfulness or rejection by persons: by one’s own family, community, work group...; by not visiting or giving attention to the needy, by not helping the poor; by lying, cheating, injustice, forgetfulness, hatred; by immaturity or egoism in affectivity and sexuality. All these have to be avoided in a Marianist school.¹⁸

¹⁸ Luis María Lizarraga, *Educación, rasgos de la pedagogía marianista* (Madrid: SPM, 1997), 179-199.

3. Encounter of the human person with nature, ecological relationship

The human person is a “being-in-the-world.” He is one more being in the world who establishes relationships with others. He relates to and encounters as well its plants and animals. He is someone *before and face to face with* things and living beings. He receives from them and gives to them. Our body allows us to relate to and to encounter nature through our work, our care for creation, avoidance of waste, appreciation and respect for plants and animals. Thus the human person becomes rooted in material reality, in his environment, in his earth itself. Thus he recalls and nourishes his roots. The Marianist school must cultivate this ecological dimension. It is incumbent upon it to promote a new sensitivity to the cosmos as a whole, reacting firmly against the assaults that are committed against nature.

4. Encounter of the human person with God

The human person is “a being from and for God.” This relationship is characterized by the experience of faith, adoration, trust and petition. The human person goes beyond himself to things and to other persons. He takes a leap in that transcendence of self and finds something that gives it meaning: God. In Jesus it is revealed to us that man encounters his own truly human face when he discovers himself as a child of God and lives as such.

These encounters, as we see in the gospel, take the form of presence, dialogue, interaction and transformation. They are

changed into a relationship with someone who is beside us. It is a presence that is felt and that occurs through a mysterious activity. It is a dialogue desired by God, facilitated through the work of creation and accepted by the human person.

The four major encounters are involved with each other. I draw close to God and strengthen my relationship with him. A good relationship in community is a marvelous starting point for communication with God. Dialoguing with God is indispensable for dialoguing with men. With my body I approach other persons and in the world of nature I adore the Lord. In Marianist education these relationships are strengthened and to that end the appropriate encounters are multiplied. In that education the pedagogy of encounter has been developed, and one comes to the conclusion that all four relationships are indispensable. The absence of any one of them entails many negative consequences. Silence is important and so is prayer; no less important is the public and political dimension of life, like the watering and cultivation of the plants in the garden.

V | THE BENEFITS OF MARIANIST EDUCATION

The anthropological principles are at the roots of Marianist education. The fruits demonstrate to us their quality. What are the fruits? We Marianists have been creating educational works since our beginnings. Today we continue to invest the

best of our human and material resources in education. We are conscious that it is “the force of the future.” For it and with it changes are made. It is clear that in education we can’t afford to improvise. We seek to furnish tools to human beings – students, teachers, parents, educational assistants – so that they can build a future, working for the civic common good and nourishing their faith. Each Marianist educational establishment has its own mission and its own spirit.¹⁹ What outcomes do we want from that mission?

- *We want to form consistent and solid people*, although speaking of “solid people” can sound pretentious and seem more closely associated with movies about US Marines than what we see all around us day after day. Our goal refers to forming people, above all our students, who know how and want to make an all-out effort and, at the same time, are willing to apologize when they are wrong or discover their own weakness. There is no intention of transforming them into Superman nor into human beings who never make a mistake. We try to educate persons who feel, enjoy, know how to have a good time and work at fulfilling their dreams, who fight tenaciously against evil. These people will be capable of confronting difficulties, of profiting from the opportunities that life presents to them and offering opportunities to others. Thus *leaders* are formed, not *la crème de la crème*, but *servant leaders*, i.e., persons who think and

¹⁹ Cf. Paul Hoffer, *Pédagogie marianiste*, (Paris : Centre de documentation scolaire, 1946), 297-313.

decide for themselves, who can take initiatives and imagine alternatives, who attract and bring together other people. Persons who form their own opinions, who are above the common herd mentality or inertia. The Marianist school tries to empower the best in each person.

- We seek to educate competent young people, good students. We speak of academic excellence, of good grades, of sustained effort. Of course, we have to offer a solid formation, a program of serious studies. We certainly have to demand quality in learning; the students have to work for good grades and acquire the best competencies in the area of the intellectual, in communication and teamwork. We can't settle for mediocrity since each member of a Marianist school has enormous capacities that can be exploited for the sake of other people. Out of this is born an education that is demanding, that values effort, that plans for challenges, that moves one constantly forward.
- *We seek to produce persons who are compassionate and at the same time have a personal and meaningful direction to their lives, values they are willing to fight for; persons who set out in good company in new directions, who pursue something great and worthwhile, who know for what they are fighting and whom they want to follow. We look for youth who are compassionate because they have experienced their own weakness and because of it are willing to give the best of themselves to free others from their weaknesses. We want to see human beings who are restless, who feel, desire and pursue their dreams, knowing all the while that the greatest*

of those dreams consists in exercising compassion. These persons do not plan their life goals as something aside from the world. They are capable of understanding their life as a part of something much greater. This is not easy because the messages coming from adults to young people insist on their making themselves the center of the world. It is important to bring them to look outside themselves, at the fascinating world, so full of possibilities, but also wounded and where many persons are in need of healing.

- *We seek community-minded people, who include others, who exclude no one.* In a Marianist school one learns to live with that which is different, to accept and live with those who think and feel differently. The quality of its members is measured by their abilities to live with anyone who has any kind of weakness. That is not easy. But in our society we especially need to overcome the kind of selectivity that discriminates and the competitiveness that humiliates. *Specifically we need men and women educated to include others and accustomed to the kind of encounter that leads to communion.* For that, they need to have had practice in understanding, in equality and in generosity.
- *We seek good citizens, and citizens of the world:* those who obey the traffic laws and admire both the landscapes and the history of their country; those who educate themselves to serve and who serve to overcome without putting anyone down; those who understand that in their own country and among its inhabitants they have rights and duties, and they fulfill them. Among those duties is that of studying, that of

participating in civic life, of voting, of knowing the history of one's own country and of remembering all those who have fought for justice in it. If one is a good citizen when walking along the street, he sees many people and prays for all of them, for those in his country who are suffering and for those who hold political responsibilities in their hands. The Marianist student bears within himself the soul of his country; one can see it in his face.

- *We seek people who believe.* The Marianists offer in their schools, directly and explicitly, the opportunity to assimilate the gospel as a way of life that leads to the encounter with God, a Father with whom one can have a close and trusting relationship. Thus we cultivate a passionate love for Christ and for humanity. For that purpose Marianist educational programming must be robust. At base, it involves helping persons to understand that the gospel of the Kingdom speaks of a presence of Jesus in our personal stories and of a pattern which gives meaning to our lives. In the Marianist school one learns to discover Mary as the Morning Star that lights up our steps, as mother, protectress and companion on the journey.

Achieving this integral profile is at the heart of Marianist education, which aims at “producing” men and women who are happy, dedicated citizens and committed believers. There is no doubt that none of these images that we have invoked either completely defines or exhausts the reality. But if there is anything that unites and identifies them, it is that the Marianist school presents a distinct form of living and believing, of serv-

ing and loving. Like any ideal, this educational undertaking is, *on the one hand, incomplete, and on the other, very ambitious*. We know well that values are lived, not merely taught; they must be seen and made part of one's daily life. In education no one has a magic wand. But we must all give our best in order to believe, to grow and to truly commit ourselves.²⁰

CONCLUSION LIVING IN CELEBRATION, PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING FOR HUMAN LIFE

All of this study leads us to conclude that the development of a good anthropology and identification of its principal lines of thought is important for Marianist educators in order to promote an integral educational undertaking. This commitment is part of our spirituality. Mary's bosom and the house in Nazareth became the best places, the best school, for becoming a human person. *In this reflection and this program which we have done there is "myth" and there is "logos."* There is myth because everything begins with a charism, continues with a spirituality, takes on a mission, is expressed in a culture and is put into practice in a classroom. Just for that reason, there are many affirmations about this work that are not immediately visible; they are presupposed. There is "logos" in the sense that there exist many other affirmations that can be enlightening, inspirational, clarifying, critically evaluative

²⁰ Cf. Fernando Savater, *El valor de educar*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 1997), 18-19.

of daily life and which are better developed and more in contrast with the current reality. From Father Chaminade and from the documents of our tradition we have received a “myth,” a myth that had to enter into history, confront it and thus develop. An important part of the interpretation of this myth is the vision of the human person. Even more, this vision is like the foundation upon which everything is built up. Speaking metaphorically, we might say that this foundation is like a shoe that must fit well for the person who wants to walk the pathways of Marianist education. To face a fruitful future, we need to nourish the Marianist educational myth and articulate it with a good anthropology.

In this type of education, life is presented as a vocation, as a call from the Lord to communion with Him, as the way to arrive at a destination, as a response or as a relationship. It offers us a sound method for proceeding, which ends in social commitment. *There are elements for all these options and for integrating them one with another, as well as for channeling the flow of events.*

What we have been contemplating leaves us with questions. And for these questions we have sought answers, and the answers have been converted into a program, *a program that is life-giving. In the face of life we feel like celebrating.* That is what the Marianist does when he reflects upon being human. To conclude:

- *Believing* that we are followers of him who was incarnated in Mary’s womb and is presented as the new human person in his fullness, who calls men and women of all ages to conversion, renewal and hope.

- *Asking pardon* for one's sins of infidelity to the profound call to truth; a truth that makes us free, generous and just and leads us to cast off the "old human person," all that is not worthy of humanness in our lives, in order to put on the new human person.
- *Interceding* for the grace to proceed as men and women full of life, since only persons full of life give glory to the God of Jesus Christ. All of us share in the contradictions of being human and in order to overcome them we need the grace of the Lord.
- *Giving thanks* for the vocation and the call to believe, to hope and to love. The human person is more human not when he ignores God, but when he adheres to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Marianist gives thanks because in his task of becoming a person, Jesus Christ is not merely the horizon towards which he journeys, but also his companion.
- *Praising God*, who has shown to us in Jesus the true face of the human person. Questionings, sufferings and contradictions have not disappeared from our lives. They disappear only when we replace any idol with God. But the wonderful force for the good, for beauty and for truth has never ceased to exist. That is what makes it only a dream to think that we can make poverty disappear from the world, but that it remains a duty to work at reducing it.

To develop a celebratory attitude, the human person has to truly work at it with gratitude for the strength that comes

from on high to achieve it. The Marianist does well to remember that being a human person is something both to be worked at and a gift:

To be worked at

Each day we experience the fact that we are unfinished, that we are not yet at the end of learning—learning how to live together, to work and, above all, to be.²¹ We must take up this task with confidence, with responsibility and with hope. We have to become human, which involves the development of our capabilities. Practicing at being a human person is essential for succeeding in becoming one. For that we must constantly be making choices and responding to the voice that calls us to life, to the good and to truth. This does not mean confusing anthropology with ethics. But this requires that he who would approach the good have a good human foundation. For the same reason, in Marianist education we cannot neglect to stress this task. For this we commit our energies to the following elements:

- Authenticity, which we seek, while at the same time we are very alienated.
- Liberation, which we seek, but at the same time we suffer for being very repressed and oppressed.
- Fraternity, in which we seek to be closer to persons, but at the same time we feel more alone than ever.

²¹ Delors, 20-22.

- Simplicity, since we want a simple life-style, but at the same time while we have lots more things than we did previously, life is emptier.
- Productivity, for which we seek greater efficiency, but we are less human than in other ages.
- A healthy incentive, since we are aware of our accomplishments, but at the same time feel threatened.

The quest for human fulfillment has to be taken up time and again. Hermann Hesse's advice is wise: "To achieve the possible, we must try the impossible again and again." Marianist education receives a strong call from its anthropology. Competency-based education is relatively recent in our education but brings a lot of good new elements. It is being implemented with conviction, gaining an almost unstoppable momentum and acquiring a very productive wisdom.²² Consistent with the anthropological principles we have described, we see a significant methodological change for our educational work.

A gift

It is clear that the human person has work to do. He learns to be person through what he does and how he lives, from his encounters and from the effort to overcome misunderstand-

²² Cf. José Luis Trechera, *La sabiduría de la tortuga: Sin prisa pero sin pausa* in Colección sociedad actual. (Córdoba: Almuzara, 2007).

ings. But experience tells us time and time again that it is not easy to orient our lives towards that which can make us more human. We need to receive light and strength from the Lord in order to achieve fulfillment as person. Then we discover that we are human only in being more than human. Ultimately, in our own bodies we discover that alienation, injustice and violence do not have the last word. We discover that evil has been despoiled of its absolute power, that no executioner will triumph over his victim and that all who struggle to become more human each day will arrive at it some day because it is a gift of the Lord for which we must thank him. Our human reality has two faces: that of nature and that of grace, the latter being pure gift. The effort to become fully man or woman is like a liturgical celebration and has all its dimensions. At bottom, all is grace.

The anthropological principles of Marianist education were born from an *experience of humanity* which continues to develop. That is what we have tried to articulate, to bring together and to propound. We have a patrimony of humanness that we need to know how to exploit. That constitutes what ought to be our reflection upon the *origins and foundations* of Marianist education. It can be a wonderful handing on of living memory because we are no different from those who have left us their memories. For that, we need to strive to put the human person in the place due to him. But that person needs also to be stretched higher and lower, to embrace what is near and what is far away. The gospel passage (extended a bit), “The truth shall make you free to love,” epitomizes what we try to do with

Marianist education: confront the human person with the truth that he is creature. This is a truth that makes us free, that liberates, and for that liberation there is no other path but that of loving service.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you think that in our educational work we fall into some of the *distortions* that are described in the text (I.1) in relation to our vision of the human person?
2. In what way are the great *questions* about the human person present in our educational praxis: life, love, happiness, evil, unity in diversity, the forces within ourselves?
3. How do we deal, in our educational praxis, with the *sources* from which we offer responses to the big questions (being man-woman; being Christian; being Marianist; living in a particular culture; functioning in the postmodern world)?
4. Do we create spaces and times for silence in our school? Do we stimulate a love for truth?
5. What reflections and implications for education are suggested to you by the ways described in the text about our approach to being human (as an *Intuition*, as a *Vision*, as a *Description*, as a *Definition*)?
6. What aspects of the *Marianist program* of educating and of being would you highlight? What importance is given in your school to the search for truth, to esthetic experience, to service in doing good to others?

7. In our school do we promote the encounter of the person with himself, with others, with nature, with God? How do we do it and how might it be improved?

8. How do you evaluate the *outcome, the fruit* of our education? Do we succeed in forming solid people, competent youth, good students, compassionate persons who have a personal life program, community members, good citizens, believing persons? Do we know how to bring out the best in each one, to demand of him all that he can give?

9. Are there spaces and times for *celebration* (liturgy, prayer, encounter, festivals...) in the school community: with the students, the teachers, the maintenance staff, the parents, the alumni...?

Chapter II

EDUCATING FOR FORMATION IN
FAITH

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN MARIANIST EDUCATION

Rosa M^a Neuenschwander de Rivas

The approach to the God question, which we call theology, has recently gone through a process of re-visioning. We can also speak of a rethinking of the principles underpinning the understanding of God in Christianity. This means a return to the primary reason for the entire Christian experience, a return to the originating source so as to attempt to speak about God: Jesus. “No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (Jn 1:18 *NJB*).

It is not that older theology had forgotten this principle. Nevertheless, in not considering it primary and in not deriving from it all its consequences, it diverted the theological understanding of the Christian God towards a vision charged with transcendence to the neglect of the human.

The crucial problem of theology lies not only in the vocabulary used to speak about God, when referring to his transcendence, but in the implications of this statement. Is it possible to acknowledge the absolute transcendence of God without compromising the human being’s status as person and his inviolable dignity?

The turn taken by theology responds to this question and recognizes that, in the practical order, Christian living forgot to stress the newness of Jesus as He who reveals and speaks to us of God (whom we cannot see) precisely through his humanity. The nature of a transcendent God must be understood, lived and explained in human categories. It is a seeking of the Transcendent in the depths and from the depths of the human.

This theological re-thinking seeks to restore the humanity of Jesus because his real humanness becomes obscured when theology tries to explain his humanity as dependent upon his divinity.

**IN WHAT GOD DO WE
MARIANISTS BELIEVE?
IN THE GOD OF JESUS**

The Marianist tradition has followed the path of the insight in this approach: in order to take a correct position in the question about seeing God, it is fundamental to keep in mind that the God in whom we as Christians believe is he who became incarnate in a human being, in Jesus of Nazareth. The God in whom we as Marianists believe has shown us himself in his humanness.

Going back to the fundamental principles of Marianist education demands that we seriously rethink about what understanding of God we are conveying, what experience of God we are communicating as we teach. And if to speak of God is to speak of Jesus, what is the image of Jesus that we teach, which Jesus are we speaking about, about which Jesus are we thinking and which Jesus do we follow?

The consequences of this rethinking have concrete effects upon our educational program, because they involve our program in relationship and commitment to every human being,

especially to those who are deprived of living in conditions befitting their humanity.

1. God's humanness is Jesus

Just what is this God of Jesus? Jesus, as the theological principle essential to Christianity, gives us the event and the mystery of his Incarnation so that we might discover what and who is this God that he reveals to us. For Marianists the Incarnation is the distinctive character of our charism and, by extension, of the education that we promote. Our educational work puts into practice a fundamental theological insight in the vocation and mission of Father Chaminade. As in many other things, he was ahead of his time in being faithful to the truth of the Gospel.

The Incarnation is the mystery-event in Jesus that opens for us the understanding of the nature of God. It means not only the divinization of the human being but also the humanization of God. The God in whom we Christians believe is he who melds with the human.

The view of God approached from absolute transcendence interpreted the Incarnation as “divinization of the human being and not as the humanization of God.” It presented Jesus as remote from the human condition, as a consequence of the difficulty – for a long time insuperable – of accepting the fact that the Incarnation reveals to us and invites us to accept the humanness of God.

The basic problem is that we can't get it into our heads that, starting with the Incarnation of God, Christianity radically changed the manner of understanding the transcendence of God. And, in consequence, that it is in the human as Jesus has revealed it to us, that we encounter the mystery of God himself and the mystery of each human being.

2. Recovering the humanness of Jesus in order to speak of God

We need to return to Jesus, as really and qualitatively human. The crux of the question is not only to affirm that Jesus is truly man, but how he is so and, from that how to understand his person and his mission, the mystery of him and the mystery of ourselves. Father Chaminade understood it well when, after the French Revolution, he proposed to rescue people from all the situations of dehumanization that they were experiencing as a consequence of their loss of faith in God.

The risk in saying that Jesus is human without explaining how he is so is to speak of a mythical, divinized humanity, alien to the experience of those who seek and hope, who suffer and trust, who are faced with temptation and doubt, who grow and mature over time. The misunderstanding of humanness is a consequence of how we misunderstand God's becoming flesh.

It is a matter of recovering just how he was and how he lived his humanity in order to decipher in his words and actions the lifestyle he showed us for living a true humanity. This true humanity is not to be found in power or riches, but in love, in

pardon, in service which promotes brotherhood among people. This is the legitimate view of God and the only way to believe in him. And it should be still today, as it was for the Marianist tradition, the truth that underpins and identifies our education for forming in faith. It is imperative that we orient our formation in faith through an integral formation of persons that makes them fully human and humanizing.

The image of man revealed in Jesus overcomes all the dehumanizing forces inherent in our human condition itself. because being human means loving and suffering. But it also means hating and causing suffering. The humanization that transcends the merely human is the achievement of a love and a solidarity with suffering that overcome and banish all hatred, all aggression and every manifestation of inhumanity that casts a dark shadow over this world.

Today, as yesterday, the dehumanizing forces that affect us all cannot be overcome if we do not take account of a “Thou,” of an “Other,” which is based in the human but at the same time transcends it. Every human being carries within himself two needs: “to be for” and “to be with.” An inescapable task in our educational work is the struggle to reverse the conditions of dehumanization that affect today’s persons and societies. This kind of experience allows oneself to open up to the true dimension of understanding God. The God of Jesus will urge us onwards towards recognition of his real and active presence as the author of life.

3. Jesus as model for education in faith

The God of Jesus is the God who is open to humanity, which he touches with his nearness. He is the God called *Abba*, of whom Jesus himself was the face and manifestation when he received all those who came to him so that he might give them life and dignity (Mt 9:35-38). For that, Jesus' humanness was transformed into a parable of God, a different God, certainly, that challenges any manipulative images of him. The *Abba*, model of a God who is a loving father/mother, changed the paradigms of our knowledge of God. And in changing the paradigm, Jesus proposed a new model for formation in faith, one that must guide the ways of forming and inviting to the experience of faith we offer in Marianist education.

As we see repeatedly in the Gospels, the image of God that Jesus shows is that of a God with whom he has the familiarity and closeness of the intimate relationship of a father or mother with their child. He is a God to whom Jesus turned constantly, with whom he spoke and to whom he prayed, in whom he hoped and trusted, even up to the moment of his death (Lk 23:46). He is the God to whom we too can and ought to turn in trustful prayer, as a child speaks to its father or mother (Mt 6:9-13). The family spirit cultivated in Marianist educational institutions must continue to draw inspiration from this vision of God as shown by Jesus, but also to authenticate itself according to that vision. The familiarity with and closeness to persons defines and identifies the Marianist educator, precisely because his experience of God is the experience of Jesus. In Jesus we learn the way of treating and educating that is synonymous with humanizing the other person.

On the other hand, if the Gospels bring us to feel the urgent need of recovering the humanness of God in the person of Jesus, it is up to us to recover that humanness in order to convey the surprising and fascinating significance of the divinity that reveals itself to us in the Incarnation. That is why, for Marianist educators, humanity is not an idol but an icon, a symbol that is real, not empty. Drawing near to the humanness of Jesus is not seen as closing off his divinity; quite the contrary, in his humanness we encounter the new revelation of the divinity. God's becoming man in Jesus allows us to see God's transcendence in a new and unique way.

In taking this perspective into account, in addition to enriching his understanding and explanations of the nature and activity of God, the teacher picks up anew the invitation of Jesus. He spoke to us of God, not with theoretical explanations of defined and promulgated truths, but in showing his love and passionate interest in the life of every individual person. God is love, the First Letter of John tells us; we have known it in hearing, seeing and touching the person of Jesus.

There are certainly still today hesitations in drawing out the full consequences of this statement. The fear comes from the fact that such a statement means accepting that, in Jesus, God has fused and merged with the human. In the educational context, such consequences acquire vital importance because for us Marianists they signify asking questions about the meaning of formation in faith, and also because they determine the style of Marianist pedagogy. In the first place, these consequences

revolutionize our way of educating in the faith or, better yet, our very way of understanding faith. And second, they give a new dimension to our primary objective of forming in faith: we must begin at the level of human formation in order to render credible the experience of God:

*Knowledge of the contents of the faith is no more than a means of nourishing the Christian life. Simply convincing the intellect is not enough; it is also necessary to win over the heart and the will. Ideas have to pass on into practice in one's life.*²³

All that has been said leads us to question a faith that does not produce a profound humanization in persons. True faith in the humanness of Jesus demands taking up the task of humanizing people. It means facing the impossibility of experiencing God while neglecting the human, while ignoring Jesus's way of being human that brought on his death.

This leads us to question also the way in which we educate in faith, when that does not improve the quality of life of those we educate by simultaneously getting them engaged in the project of making life more human for others. And the primary witness to humanness is the Marianist educator himself, but it is also the educational structure founded and oriented to this purpose.²⁴

²³ Hoffer, cited in "Características de la educación marianista," (Curso virtual de la Universidad de Dayton; n.d.).

²⁴ *Constitutions of the Society of Mary* [of 1891], Art. 273: "Let no one think that for this purpose it is necessary to devote the greater part of the time to the teaching of religion and to its practices; with a constant intention of attaining this end, a good Brother imparts a Christian lesson by every word, every gesture, and every look."

Ultimately, what Jesus teaches us is God's plan. And what God asks of us is not that we divinize ourselves, still less that we become gods, but that we ourselves become more human. As Marianist educators faithful to our heritage, we have chosen to undertake to be disciples of Jesus in order to make us each day more simply human and to educate by forging complete and happy persons:

A Marianist educational institution tries to form persons who are adult in their faith. For that, it simultaneously offers a conceptual vision coherent with the gospel and presents explicitly the person and message of Jesus Christ, while respecting the free and responsible choices of the students. The high school education prepares young people to assume responsibilities both within the institution itself and in the other circles of their lives, in such a way that they grow to be capable of giving a personal, free and authentic response to the Christian message.²⁵

To be consistent, we need to create an evaluation instrument that permits us to judge if the organization of our works reflects this orientation of “forming in faith.” If it doesn't, we need to start a program of reformulation and/or creation of strategic plans that can implement this model. This calls for revising not only pedagogical praxis in the teaching of religion, but also other institutional structures: direction, campus ministry, administration. It takes courage to let go of taken-for-granted styles of operation but, in fidelity to a core principle of Father

²⁵ “Características” curso.

Chaminade's heritage, openness to change must be part and parcel of the pattern of Marianist life and education.

4. The sacred character of every human being in Marianist education

For Marianist education, an inescapable and principal consequence flowing from the God of Jesus has to do with the sacred character of the human being. The Marianist charism is perceived as identified with this truth and, in its pedagogy, the human person – the receiver of and reason for teaching – is sacred.

In forming their students in faith, the teachers in Marianist institutions help the children and youth to experience a feeling for life that makes them sensitive to the sacred, to the good, to truth, to beauty, and to use these as guidelines for their daily activities. The inspiration of Marianist educators has always been the sacral nature of each human being. From the beginning of his concern for the youth of French society, Father Chaminade considered his mission of educating as a response to and care for the sacred and unique personality of each individual. This care for their life was his response to the call received in the words of Mary: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:42).²⁶

²⁶ Lizarraga, *Educator: Rasgos*, 55: “Guided by the spirit of faith, the Marianist educator “discerns, respects, and venerates in the weak frame of the child the very person of Jesus Christ and the price of his blood’ (Constitutions of the Society of Mary [of 1891], Art. 266). That is God’s way of acting with the human person. Discovering, respecting and venerating Jesus Christ in the person of the other is the way of progressing in interpersonal relations suggested to us by faith.”

*The principles of faith are those which impel us to respect the student, because what we esteem in him is above all the very image of God. It is from those great principles that Marianist pedagogy has drawn its inspiration.*²⁷

Throughout the history of our journey as educators, we have always taken on the task of forming a particular type of person. Our model is that of a man or a woman cast in the mold of Jesus of Nazareth, a person who places human values above all else, except for God himself; a person interested in science with a great curiosity to know all of creation and equipped with excellent methodologies for arriving at the truth; a convinced Christian committed to Jesus's plan for humanity, which is not only loving and serving one's neighbor, but also God. In our time, the primacy of the human person, in light of his sacredness, must not be allowed to suffer decline or dilution.²⁸ On the contrary, our mission as Marianist educators drives us to choose with renewed enthusiasm to contribute towards the universal recognition of the sacred nature of every human being.

²⁷ Ibid., 57.

²⁸ *V General Council of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Concluding Document [Document of Aparecida]*, 388: "We proclaim that all human beings exist purely and simply by the love of God who created them, and by the love of God who preserves them at every moment. The creation of man and woman in his image and likeness is a divine event of life, and its source is the faithful love of the Lord. Hence, only the Lord is author and master of life, and human beings, his living image, are always sacred, from their conception, at all stages of existence, until their natural death, and after death. The Christian view of human beings makes apparent their value, which transcends the entire universe: 'God has shown us unsurpassably how he loves all human beings, and thereby confers infinite dignity on them.'"

The revitalization of our apostolic work urges us to consider as a truly normative principle the sacred value of the recipients of our education. The Marianist pedagogical tradition insists upon the respect due to each person as a child of God, unique and individual. We respect their differences and we try to adapt our teaching styles to their needs and capabilities, compelled by our convictions that we consider them, as did Father Chaminade, a gift from God that we must love and care for. We deal with men and women whose sacred character must be fully respected and, therefore, we must be creators, carriers and promoters for its universal recognition. We also know that we are offering an education not limited to the students' years in school nor only to the school campus, but an education that impacts their whole lives.

Our *raison d'être* as Marianists, which is none other than that of believing Christians, will demand that we review just how we are conducting our educational mission to arrive at this goal. Nothing could be further from the intentions of Jesus than holding on to position, mere conformity, rigidity, stagnation or divisiveness. Nothing is further from our tradition and charism than the refusal to take up renewal, the lack of attentive listening and of creative responses to the real situations of our societies, with all their complexity and their indications of human crisis.

Our Marianist identity marks us as open-minded, as innovators, just as Father Chaminade's mission was innovative and daring. Both as his followers and as disciples of a Jesus who

had no position but was the builder of new horizons, Marianist educators must have the courage to move ahead and search, to explore and find, to take risks and make mistakes. The fear of change cannot exempt us from seeking new ways of continuing to live our educational mission as a realization of the Gospel. It is time for us to address questions, as well as doubts and criticisms, as we are guided and dedicated to the rethinking and even changing of paradigms when necessary. We have to begin anew each day, but especially in these times in which taking up education with a proper and unique agenda drives us to create a counterculture.

With Jesus we discover that his vision was to make the Kingdom present, that is, to work for the good of every human being, the good of each human being.²⁹ We are engaged in constructing the Kingdom in our educational organizations, where to educate means to confer dignity upon all, especially upon the marginalized, to put oneself on the side of those who are excluded by society and to struggle against injustice, institutionalized hypocrisy and slaveries. This demands educators with an internal freedom, the capacity to overcome obstacles, an absolute availability, a love without limits and the acceptance of risks,³⁰ and especially the risk of being prophets of the life proclaimed by Jesus for all.

²⁹ Ibid., 332. “When we speak of a Christian education, therefore, we understand that the teacher is educating toward a project of a human being in whom Jesus Christ dwells with the transforming power of his new life.”

³⁰ Manuel Madueño, *Siguiendo a Jesús Hijo de María: Un camino para vivir la espiritualidad marianista* (Madrid: SPM, 1999), 40.

We need to invest our entire being, our strength, our structures and our resources so as to achieve in our school program a renewal that will be on-going and, at the same time, faithful to the Marianist style. That renewal demands the formation of and commitment by each Marianist educator, religious or lay, to the program. We need a "formation of the heart,"³¹ that communicates and reflects our experience of God in Jesus. Only in that way can we succeed in guiding our students towards an encounter with God in Jesus that will fill them with love, that will open up their lives to others and that will bring them to love their neighbor as a necessary and happy outcome of their faith.

**|| HANDING ON FAITH IN THE GOD
OF JESUS: EDUCATING FOR
UNION WITH THE LIBERATING
WORK OF JESUS**

How do we Marianists proclaim the God revealed in Jesus?
How do we carry out the mission of handing on faith in the
God of Jesus in whom we believe?

If we look at the path undertaken in Father Chaminade's life and
vision, our mission and our apostolic action have always been

³¹ "Educating together in a Catholic school is a mission shared by consecrated persons and lay faithful," in "Características" curso.

expressed in the work of educating. Educating is our mission. Thus “every Marianist apostolic activity is education”³² and all those who, in one way or another, work in it participate in the same mission.³³

Jesus continues to invite us to reproduce his experience, his mission to teach the face of a God who speaks out of our humanity in order to restore it to its fullness. That means taking to ourselves his own perspective and following his footsteps. At the same time, we have to insist upon the fact that along the path of educating in faith there are many possibilities, many alternatives, many invitations and suggestions, but only those are ultimately valid which reproduce his very life (“to live [just] as he lived” 1 Jn 2:6 *NABRE*). Only those pedagogical strategies are valid that lead to him, that point clearly to him, that spring from his word, that are marked by the characteristic traits of his mission and his message.³⁴

We must, therefore, re-examine our vocation as teachers identified with the mission of educating. And this will be possible with a clearly visible and lasting closeness to the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We need to fix in our own vocational con-

³² Stephen Glodek, *Marianist Educational Praxis: Establishing a Marianist Educational Culture*, 2.

³³ Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 30: “This is a conviction that the Founder wanted to inculcate in all those who were working in a Marianist institution. The specific contribution that one personally makes in the overall work might not seem very apparent, but one must be convinced that he is participating in a much broader mission.”

³⁴ *Idem*.

sciousness the way in which Jesus confronted the society of his time, with a pedagogical approach sustained by the conviction that we are showing the human face of God. Jesus knew how to educate by means of the Word, as he tried to overcome the violence and fatalism of his time. His teaching about love generated hatred and persecution from his opponents, but in those he actually did form he brought about a transformation and joy. As Ignacio Otano reminds us, "Chaminade believed in education as an important element in the regeneration of society, teaching that every educator should be conscious of the fact that he himself is part of an important mission."³⁵

Just as today, the society of Jesus's time was marked by the symptoms of the dehumanization and death bred by the Roman Empire and the Jewish religion. The task of proclaiming the Kingdom as an alternative to the models of society they imposed had to be done with conviction, radicalism, enthusiasm and authority. Jesus taught with authority (Mt 7:28ff; Mk 1:27), and his authority was based both on his certainty of living with God as his Father and on the process of living humanly as profoundly as he did. Does our pedagogical work as Marianists make for an authoritative presence in the midst of the societies where we live? Are we considered an educational alternative because we unambiguously express our option as centered on the human person?

Following Jesus then, Marianist education cannot be mere data transmission or approaches to definitions of God and minis-

³⁵ Ibid., 29.

try. We feel called to connect all our apostolic activity with the impulse to unite ourselves to the saving work of Jesus. In his heart beat the desire to bring salvation to all and that is what must also beat in the heart of every Marianist teacher. Jesus taught in such a way as to bring men and women to identify with his mission (Mt 10:5-16). This is one of the great pedagogical strengths of Jesus and of the Marianist charism. He knew how to bring human beings, reconciled through his Word, to identify with his work of liberation.³⁶

“Teaching to educate” is not just a pretty motto. We try to “educate,” that is, to help people develop the best of themselves so that they might be happy and contribute to a happier world; that is God’s plan. We must, therefore, seek out the real needs of the people and of the society in which they live. And that will be one of the keys to the educational works we undertake: not merely theoretical teaching, but an education that takes into account the environment in which the student lives. Therefore this education furnishes him, to the fullest degree possible, with the tools necessary for dealing responsibly with real life on the one hand, and on the other for undertaking to bring improvement to that real situation.³⁷

³⁶ Thus it was proclaimed by the Latin American Church in the assembly of the bishops in Aparecida (Document of Aparecida, 333): “That means that it is inconceivable that the Gospel can be proclaimed unless it illuminates, infuses encouragement and hope, and inspires adequate solutions to the problems of existence; nor can a true and full promotion of human beings be conceived without opening them to God and proclaiming Jesus Christ to them.”

³⁷ Otaño, *Enseñar para Educar*, p. 18.

Are we actually accomplishing with our work the commitment of youth, children, parents, our educational community to the Kingdom? Do our works really seek to form men and women as disciples of Jesus who are passionate about his vision of a new humanity, or men and women who are simply academically qualified individuals?

Father Chaminade inculcated in his first companions the personality of Jesus, teacher of the Kingdom, who lived unencumbered and free (Mt 8:20), convinced and convincing. His attitude not only made believable His message, but also the message of Father Chaminade's pedagogical undertaking. That attitude of Jesus is a permanent invitation to pursue the initial inspiration of our foundation, faithful to the good Marianist tradition that upholds it.

Our educational history has always sought to show that the message of Jesus has little to do with a merely "spiritual" faith, far from concrete reality, concerned only with the supernatural. Putting that message into practice cannot be done without involving ourselves in the social fabric in which we are living³⁸ and without including working for a more just and fraternal society. The improvement of people's living conditions and the effort to achieve a more just society are included in the proclamation of the Good News and have always formed part of the Marianist mission.³⁹ We resort to all that can make the

³⁸ José Antonio Romeo e Ignacio Zabala, *La Espiritualidad marianista en la Iglesia de hoy: Esquemas para reuniones de grupos*, (Madrid: Editorial SM, 1989), 113.

³⁹ Idem.

world more human: “...we work at the direct proclamation of the gospel and also at the enrichment of culture and the transformation of society... to unity with those who struggle for justice, freedom and dignity...”⁴⁰

“Father Chaminade insisted that his disciples have an active presence in society. He did not plan for them a life oblivious to the vital and concrete interests of the people. He urged them to be present wherever their activity could be beneficial.”⁴¹ We have always seen that presence manifested in our Marianist vocation to educate, not only in the schools but in every apostolic activity undertaken:

*(Educate for service, justice and peace): we ought to ensure that these values are a reality at the heart of every school. The school organization and the interpersonal relations therein must be guided by the two principles of justice and respect. On the other hand, in the work with the students we have to include a program of activities that promote social commitment with reflection upon and rigorous study of the causes that inhibit justice and peace and justice from becoming real in our world.*⁴²

To see the Marianist mission from the perspective of the vocation of educators is to understand and reframe it as a real and effective contribution to society. This supposes, in the first place, a transforming of persons, achieving the point where

⁴⁰ *Rule of Life of the Society of Mary* [of 1983], Art. 72.

⁴¹ Romeo, 114.

⁴² “Characterísticas” curso.

they analyze situations according to appropriate criteria, transforming them to desire to identify themselves with lifestyles that are worthwhile. We must encourage people to seek true values,⁴³ which for us are nurtured in the person of Jesus, in his gospel, and are reflected in the legacy received from the person and work of Father Chaminade.

In this sense, we ought to concur that the most valid interpretation of Father Chaminade is not that which transmits simply the letter of his writings as if society and the Church had not changed since his times. Rather, the better interpretation is that which tries to translate his thought into our current conditions.⁴⁴

Recall, in this context, Father Chaminade's insistence on personal faith, a faith that has no other purpose than to impart the strong constancy needed for effective activity in society. Without a doubt, the revitalizing of Father Chaminade's thought to bring it up to date is to acknowledge that he himself would have stressed the need to better the human race, to bring it to achieve the best possible humanness, as shown in the person of Jesus. This does not exclude *a priori*, but rather promotes structural changes, since one cannot better the person without changing every dehumanizing structure.⁴⁵

⁴³ Romeo, 113.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, 114.

⁴⁵ Otaño, *Enseñar para Educar*, 29: "Chaminade believed in education as an important element for the regeneration of society and taught that each educator must be conscious that he shares in an important mission.... The Founder told the Marianists that all, including those who worked at the humblest tasks, were working in a mission and should feel themselves missionaries."

As Marianist educators we affirm that the goal of our educational work is to help persons live the attitudes of Jesus in practice, to carry out for love of neighbor a social commitment in imitation of Jesus and in the light of the Church's teachings.⁴⁶ We also help the students to respond to the ethnic and moral problems of our time with courage and faithfulness to the gospel.⁴⁷

In every educational work we support the progress of the students toward an adult maturity in their way of living and expressing their faith in Jesus, without undermining their free and responsible choices, when we offer an education coherent with his message and his ideal of humanness.

||| THE INCARNATION, AN IDENTIFYING TRAIT OF THE MARIANIST CHARISM AND OF OUR PEDAGOGY

The event and the mystery of the Incarnation are at the heart of the Marianist charism and constitute a mark of authentic fidelity to the legacy of the person and work of Father Chaminate. From our very beginnings we have taken as our own what

⁴⁶ Domingo Lázaro, "To educate is to actively and respectfully help the student to respect, purify, rectify, evaluate and orient all the potentialities of human nature towards his true goal," in "Características" curso.

⁴⁷ "Características" curso.

today's theology says with more conviction: that the primary and fundamental significance of the "embodiment" is that God, after a long work of preparation in the Old Testament and in the other religious traditions, and thanks to the humanity of Jesus that was totally open to his love and his call, could show us his face most truly and definitively.⁴⁸ Never before, until the coming of Jesus, was our faith in the triune God even thinkable. The truths and principles of what was preached and articulated about the concept of the Trinity found another level of understanding with the Incarnation. The participation of the Trinity in the mystery of the Incarnation has a unique importance, according to the biblical data, and therefore the Incarnation is God's clearest language for communicating with us.

This is the mystery which we contemplate throughout our personal history and that of our mission. It is the mystery to which we must return untiringly in order to renew and reformulate our educational program. Let us seek to always keep at the heart our educational work this truth which is so special to us. Given this fact, we ask, in the light of our heritage, what must we do in our educational institutions to demonstrate the task of living out the principle of the Incarnation. What does it oblige us to do in our educational work?

⁴⁸ Karl. Rahner, "Towards a Theology of the Incarnation," in *Theological Investigations IV: More Recent Writings*. (NY: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966): "Christ is man in the most radical way and his humanity is the most endowed with its own power, the freest, not in spite of being assumed, but because it is assumed."

Our towns and cities, our youth, even our children, are affected by the symptoms of the profound fatalism of our era. The fatalism of our people is growing because all the centers of power continue to impose a lifestyle on society that is characterized by the domination of the marketplace, technology, privatization, neglecting real human needs of cultural, religious, social and political identities. The consequences of all this (unemployment, impoverishment, hunger, begging, dehumanization, aggressive individualism, spiritual emptiness) drag persons and peoples down, so that idealism and hope for progress are lost. Many of our educational institutions also experience those consequences and are aware that they are living in that kind of environment and that it is in that very environment that they are offering their educational program.

1. How can we live the Incarnation today in order to communicate it to future generations?

If the Incarnation is essential to our charism, how are we living and presenting it today? How can we communicate it for future generations?

There is no doubt that the source will continue to be the rich experience of our life as Marianist educators and, as the Gospel of Matthew states, the capacity to act with wisdom, drawing what is good from the old and being open to the demand of the new, according to the evangelical reading of the signs of our times (cf. Mt 13:52b).

This means knowing how to revitalize our way of doing things without forgetting the essential. If “the essential is the interior,” as Father Chaminade said, our very being as educators, ones who make their own and live according to the educational principle of the Incarnation, opens us up to the enriching creativity of a new emphasis in our Marianist style of educating. A few of these new thrusts should be:

- Realists and pragmatic dreamers⁴⁹

Our apostolic activity, particularly in our educational institutions, has always been recognized in different environments as having a realistic and pragmatic style. Why? Because, without forgetting the spiritual dimension, we always take the realistic and the pragmatic for granted as a daily awareness that affects all the dimensions of the person (body, affectivity, emotions, relationships, actions, etc.). From the Incarnation of Jesus in Mary’s womb, as from its source, comes our understanding of God’s language as he draws near to humanity. We give our attention to the spiritual while welcoming and caring for the human, because the Incarnation also points us towards our goal. And if we have as both source and goal the Incarnation—synonymous with humanness—our means cannot be other than that same humanness in action.

Our realistic and pragmatic style entails being conscious of educating with our everyday attitudes and actions. For many

⁴⁹ Inspired by the title of the work of Joseph Stefanelli, *Chaminade: Pragmatist with a Vision* (Dayton: NACMS, 2010).

authors, one sign of our times is the loss of the meaning of life, with its consequent impact upon personal and social dimensions. Our responsibility as educators is to lead the students to the recovery of the meaning of life, beginning with the simplest expressions of our own personal commitment to living with purpose and meaning.

A Marianist educates out of the purpose of his own life, so that he leads his students to discover a purpose for their lives as well. That discovery of the why and the wherefore of their lives leads them to a congruent involvement and work for the restructuring of the social fabric.

We offer to society men and women who, at the end of their time in our schools, are capable of giving a free and personal answer, women and men not insulated from society but responsible and concerned with bringing about justice and fraternity in accord with the message of Jesus which they have embraced as their own.

Chaminade was a man who combined well his apostolic dreaming with an intense practical sense.⁵⁰ The clear vision of where we are going with our work, without neglecting the practical ways and means, must impregnate our Marianist style of educating. We offer an education that dreams about realizing the very dream of Jesus for a humanity reestablished in its most elemental dignity. Our pedagogical program must be realis-

⁵⁰ Stefanelli, 26.

tic and effective. One immediate consequence of this is the modification, and if necessary the eradication, of pedagogical styles contrary to this principle.

■ Weavers of stories

If the God of Jesus, and Jesus himself, walked and lived in the midst of the story of the human race, in the same way each Marianist educator walks in the midst of the stories of his students as he weaves with them the picture of a full humanity with the threads of their stories.

For us, the words of Paul, “born of a woman” (Gal 4:4), reveal the importance and the centrality of humanness in God’s activity on behalf of every man and woman. We are called to encounter each student as a person in the reality of his historical context, of his strengths, his struggles, his triumphs, his defeats. Coming out of our face-to-face closeness and our lives together, we educate him to take up the striving for the Kingdom. In it, the love which is justice and the justice which is love are the foundations of a renewed humanity and lead us to a concern for human life in whatever situation and in the face of any threat or aggression.

One very typically Marianist trait in our pedagogy is that we start with the person, where he is and what he feels, with the purpose of forming him for freedom and hope. That freedom is the foundation of the hope for a full humanness for all. In Jesus’ pedagogical style, it meant an

approach to the person in his individuality and uniqueness. Father Chaminade practiced that same style when he began his work to “re-christianize France.” The loss of the sense of being Christian had generated chaos and persecution for many. Recovery of that Christian mentality meant a return to the principle of the value of the life of each individual.

In selecting his disciples, Jesus took into account the uniqueness of each one. They had to be men and women with their own strengths and weaknesses. In them Jesus, as the Teacher *par excellence*, took on a work of supporting their human growth. Jesus laid out his teaching without forgetting the uniqueness of each one of his hearers. That was one of the great intuitions of Father Chaminade when he thought about involvement in the process of educating each youth or child in faith. He wanted to construct a new narrative of faith life in France through the faith stories of each of his students. Here we have an insight that is even more valid today. Marianist education emphasizes not only the academic, but also the human story of each student.

- Integrating all the dimensions of being human

When we offer an integral education, we are obliged not to neglect any dimension of the human being, convinced that a spirituality divorced from or even opposed to the human is deceptive. According to the principle of the Incarnation, any educational activity which forgets any

aspect of the human condition (affective or bodily, individual or collective, interior or exterior, social or private) is gravely incongruent with our foundational charism. The Incarnation demands that we integrate all that is human. Thus our educational style integrates everything that affects the human, that influences it or comes into contact with it.

On several occasions Jesus alluded to the importance of the spiritual/interior dimension of man and woman. He was most concerned with this aspect, without ignoring the material factors associated with the human condition: health, food, clothing, and others which contribute to human well-being. He operated with the concept of the individual human being as an integral whole, according to the Jewish view of the experience of God. In the Gospels there is no dichotomy between being human and being spiritual; both are necessary for each other to attain fulfillment and success.

■ Shared learning

To feel the need of another person in order to grow comes from understanding our humanness as an experience of growth and maturation. We are not islands; “Man is man only among other men,” said Fichte. That is to say, every individual constructs himself as a human person in his practical relationships with others.

The school is a privileged field for growth in relationship like true developers of humanness. It is no mistake when

we put relationships of love before individualistic and egoistic demands, which are destructive of brotherhood. It is our *family spirit*, an important trait of our spirituality, that calls us to this: to call again for shared learning. Not only do the students learn, but the teacher does also. No human being should stagnate. On the contrary, he should always be growing towards the best possible human condition, which for us is that of Jesus. Not to learn with others and from others is not to grow, not to live. An educator who does not open himself to all that his students offer to his own growth as a person is himself condemned not to grow, because he does not consider his students as sources of learning according to the principle of shared relationships.

This is how Jesus himself lived. In Jesus God became a small, fragile child, and in Jesus he opened himself up to the experience of growing and living with others. He learned his first words in Aramaic – *mama, papa, friend, brother* – while experiencing the relationships with his closest “others.” Mary was his first school for being human, already in her womb. And from that moment on, Jesus never stopped learning. The experiences of a dying friend, of a mother’s suffering, of the poverty and illnesses of so many of his followers taught him to become more human. He also learned from the Syro-Phoenician woman to get out beyond the Jewish nest in order to open up to others, thus overcoming the risk of an isolationist bestowal of privilege on only the Jewish people and learning the need to include all in the benefits of his message and activity (Mk 7:25-30).

Acting like a true man, Jesus taught us to recognize God (Phil 2:6-8). Time and again the Marianist comes to realize, like Jesus, that he must become a better person for the needs of others. A frequent risk, to which we Marianist educators sometimes succumb, is to posture as the consummate “know-it-all.” We must never stop learning; and we are not talking about the academic level, on which we must also continue to grow, but about the learning that takes place in the shared encounter with the very lives of others, the students, first of all, but also with the other members of our educational community.

Like that of Jesus, Marianist pedagogy cannot be a lineal, dogmatic process, but rather a cyclical process, continuous and progressive, that helps the disciple to grow in freedom, in truth, in love and in hope.

■ Educational humanism

Taking our direction from this truth, we try to live always with “our feet on the ground,”⁵¹ since our vocation, derived from the principle of the Incarnation, demands that we be involved and take a position against every temptation to indifference before human life. We stand with clear, bold and specific responses to situations that are demeaning of persons.

Like Jesus, we have no hesitation in proposing a philosophy in light of life that serves to make life fuller: “Upon disem-

⁵¹ Luis Casalá, “Otro mundo es posible,” curso virtual, Universidad de Dayton.

barking on the beach of humanity through the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ opened up a path, the path of God's love for every human being. To arrive at God, each human being has to take another path, the path of love of God and one's brethren."⁵² We take this path when we put our whole heart into our teaching, and our whole being into offering "institutions that educate for humanness." The Incarnation reminds us of how fully Mary committed herself, not only making her body available, but investing her entire life, inaugurating God's humanity through her effective participation. She herself is the first school where educational humanitarianism is nourished, i.e., a humanism that educates. The space created in the school becomes an expression of humanity in such a way that only through contact with it can education take place.

In the school of Jesus one learns freedom and humanness by following him. He called the disciples in order to teach them that which would help them to live and to serve others. His was a school of how to be human in living and in serving as their mission.

For Jesus, the valuing of the human person is essential. He recognizes and encourages respect for the other as the basic principle in pedagogical relationships and in human development, as the foundation for generating personal and social change.

⁵² Madueño, 72.

■ Active resistance (hope)

To speak of hope is to understand the process of patiently carrying out a project. This implies resistance [to inertia, to the status quo, to fatalism]*, the most accurate sense of what is called evangelical hope. Father Chaminade himself embodied an active resistance and patience as the incarnation of the hope taught by Jesus and followed by the first Christian communities. This hope is the capacity to remain grounded, steady and determined to succeed in the task to which we are committed.

Hope is not a mere mental attitude. It is a fundamental determination and essential trait of the human consciousness. Before being a virtue, it is a life principle present in the world, a settled (reasoned out) attitude, that orients the human being towards a goal, towards a purpose. It is also a virtue, but not one of closed eyes, still feet and idle hands. It is the virtue of the journey to freedom, of the exodus to the promised land: hope as action, as commitment.

Hope is the attitude of dissatisfaction with the current situation, of rebellion against the injustice of the established order, of refusal to accept the power of fate over human life. It does not submit to the fatalism of the signs of death, nor to the negativity of all suffering. But the nonconformity of hope does not remain a more or less romantic or aesthetic attitude of discontent, but drives one on to action, to assuming one's proper responsibility

in the construction of a new humanity, reestablished in all its beauty and value.

Teaching is itself an act of hope and makes us teachers of hope. Hope cannot be a vague optimism, nor a fleeting happiness that evaporates in the face of the darkness of challenges and difficulties. It is the capacity to resist, knowing that at the end we shall discover and help others to discover meaning in our lives, a significance not imposed but discovered according to the pedagogy of the teaching of Jesus.

For every Marianist today, teaching God and about God means showing him to be the being who is involved in our lives, rather than just providing information about him. In this way we shall be able to assist children and youth without fear when they face the loss of God in their own lives and help them to rediscover him as the source of all who gave himself to us in the person of his son Jesus. Marianist pedagogy is an undertaking of assisting in the processes through which humanity – and each individual person – must pass, hoping that through a slow maturation it might reach its full stature in the image of Jesus (Eph 4:13). Have we opted to form our students using the same logic that Jesus did?

2. Mary in Marianist theology and charism

All Father Chaminade's thought is permeated with Mary, and this explains how essential is the principle of the Incarna-

tion in his enterprise. As Father Chaminade went more and more into the depths of the charism, Mary gave the distinct and determinative color to his style – and therefore to that of every Marianist – and his way of following Jesus: “... [he] more clearly discerned and planned what was to become his life’s work: to assist the Mother of Jesus in her continuing role of bringing her son into our world.”⁵³ This we also understand when we recognize ourselves in the “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5), the rallying cry of our missionary identity. But, where does this assurance lead us?

If the perspectives of theology have returned to the language about the humanness of Jesus as a way of knowing God, in the same way, for the Marianists, Mary is always the direct link between humanity and the message of Jesus. Given her participation in God’s coming closer to humanity, her life is the *locus theologicus* of encounter with Jesus and, as we have already said, with God. Although we do not depend upon her for understanding Jesus, her presence, nevertheless, first as mother and later as disciple, makes her into a necessary reference point for understanding the radicalness of the mystery of the Incarnation. “Mary is not an accident in the life of Jesus.... She is neither a fluke nor the effect of a rigid necessity. *Mary just is.*”⁵⁴

Mary is at the beginning of God’s drawing intensely close to humanity. It is the coming together of the mystery of God

⁵³ Stefanelli, 6.

⁵⁴ Madueño, 26.

and of the human being precisely in the gift of her humanity for the making of the Incarnate Word of God. With her Jesus opened up the path of God's love for each human being,⁵⁵ when he made humanness the place of encounter between God and each man and woman. Marianist education, since its beginnings, has treasured this distinguishing aspect in its pedagogical program.

Every Marianist educator reproduces the experience of Mary. First of all he does so with the witness of his life, revealing in his human qualities the strength of embodying Jesus. And, second, he does so through his educational praxis, nourishing his pedagogical style in the role and mission of Mary in the liberating action of God for all humanity.

I cannot truly understand Jesus if I abstract from his condition of being son of Mary. If I aspire to understand the human side of Jesus, his "being son of Mary" tells me that God wished to reveal himself to us as a man, a man born of woman. And if I look at the human side of the Lord, "being son of Mary" speaks to me of the mother – son relationship and about the story of a child who was educated by his mother.⁵⁶

The life and educational activity of every Marianist must challenge his students to manifest the encounter of the God of

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Jesus with the human being.⁵⁷ This encounter puts him on the path to commitment to the goodness and the truth revealed in Jesus and which he himself learns in the firm and tender style of Mary's way of educating. Just like Jesus, Mary is the woman of the Spirit, because her commitment to the plan of God reflects her openness to God's inspirations in her life:

*Everything in Mary bears the seal of the gentleness, the tenderness and the affection of a mother, the mother who is completely devoted to her children so that they might have life and grow in vitality and happiness, the mother of new life, who cultivates faith, hope and love in her children.*⁵⁸

The social focus and dimension of the Marianist educational program is also supported in the model of Mary in her identity as disciple when the Gospel of Luke puts on her lips that profession of a faith so profoundly concerned with human beings and the social conditions that disfigure their human identity, the *Magnificat*:

Like Mary in the Magnificat, we proclaim the goodness and the justice of God at the same time as we denounce everything

⁵⁷ Ibid., 33: "Mary shows us the meaning we must give to our human life, when we contemplate as the woman pregnant with Jesus, as the virgin who gives birth to Jesus, as the mother who cares and teaches the child Jesus, the adolescent Jesus, the youth Jesus. Mary teaches us that human life is not a simple biological happening or the result of a statistical possibility. Nor is it just a fact isolated from something more or less wanted in someone's life. There is life only when someone hands over her own life as the price and offers it with all the implications thereof, up to and including sacrifice and death if necessary."

⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

*that signifies oppression and degradation of the person. We wish to be constructive agents of change, with the permanent mission of being witnesses to the gospel message.*⁵⁹

Social awareness has always been a necessity and remains so today for Marianist schools. From the heart of Mary, committed to the undertaking of her son Jesus, stems the conviction that one's personal actions affect other people.⁶⁰ For that reason, in following the footsteps of Mary, the Marianist educator sows and cultivates growth in service as an attitude towards others, his neighbors and his brothers. And he does it not merely as an expendable or modifiable extension of the campus ministry work in our schools, like isolated responses to commitments or to social work, but by embodying it in the curricular program and in administrative structures. And so education becomes a way of life accustomed to looking for solutions to reverse the unjust and unfortunate social conditions in which a shocking majority of people live.

A Marianist, be he teacher or student, has a clear awareness of his obligations in the social dimension of what it means to be human; in light of this he is quick to collaborate in seeking solutions, just as Mary did at the Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2).⁶¹

⁵⁹ "Educating together in the Catholic school: the shared mission of consecrated persons and lay faithful," in *Characteristics*.

⁶⁰ Henri Rousseau, S.M.

⁶¹ *Rule of Life of the Society of Mary (Marianists)* (of 2008), Art. 5.15: "Schools offer us an excellent opportunity and responsibility to work for justice and peace. Our programs should develop a critical sense which prepares students to build a just society and to promote unity and respect among all peoples."

He does it, like Mary, without ostentation that overshadows the work of Jesus. Rather, clearly understanding his own task and mission, he does so by identifying the cause and proposing a solution to the concrete situation: “They have no wine... Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). Mary teaches the Marianist the way to work for social changes without forgetting the leading role of God, like that of Jesus at Cana. Humility displaces self-sufficiency and pride in educational programs that are the fruit of merely personal ambition. If we look at Mary we can see that it is not she but Jesus who actually solves the problem of the wine. It is not she, but God who “has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly...” (Lk 1:52 *NJB*).

At the present time, the consistency of our Marian charism with the principle of the Incarnation has to be visible in the pedagogical style of our schools, and it obliges us as well to be actively present in the realms of the workplace, of culture, of politics and of the family.⁶²

3. The Marian style of communitarian Church, expression of the Incarnation

If universal brotherhood is proclaimed by the most diverse voices among humanist groups, we should shout in our own right, with our own voices, the message about equality lived and taught by Jesus. Our educational program must transmit this message, as the natural consequence and true expansion

⁶² Romeo, 114.

of our understanding it, but above all, as the consequence and expansion of our lives as inspired and motivated by the principle of the Incarnation. In our educational venues we must drink, as from a spring of clear water, this principle of equality as lived and taught by Jesus, the embodiment of God through the humanity of his mother. “The Son gives himself to Mary in order to receive humanity from her. He loves and embraces ‘human flesh’ in the maternal womb of Mary In this [embrace of loving communion], all the immensity of the love of God submits itself to the human dynamic....”⁶³

Today, just like in his own times, Father Chaminade would demand that we revitalize this style of communion that motivated his desires and plans for renovating the Church and society of his own time. What can we Marianists do in the line of such communion?

■ Communion as a principle of education

Heirs of a concern for reestablishment of fraternity and fellowship, both social and ecclesial, we are called from the very birth of our charism to a mission of being heirs and witnesses of communion.

The Marianist program for educating in faith retains as a dimension particularly its own the formation to fellowship [communion] as an expression of its faith in Jesus. One

⁶³ Manuel Cortés, Circular no. 1 (March 25, 2007), “The Spirit of the Society is the Spirit of Mary, Part One: In Christ with Mary,” 17.

fundamental way of practicing this is by extending and sustaining with all means at its disposal a welcoming and tender love and concern for all its members: students, teachers, administrative and support personnel.

In our educational works, cultivating in the students the capacities and conditions for fellowship should always be the criterion of our faithfulness to the gospel and to our charism. Students learn to live with this imperative when the witness of all those who make up the educational family encourage and convince them by their example.⁶⁴ The students graduate as mediators in establishing authentic fraternal relationships in society, because they themselves have lived the manifest experience of authentic relationships among the various members of the Marianist Family:

In this way, the community life of the educational community takes on the value of an educational principle, of a paradigm that orients its formative action as a service for maintaining a culture of fellowship. The Catholic school community, therefore, using the tools of teaching and learning, “does not transmit culture as a means to power and domination, but as a means to fellowship and to hearing the voices of people, of events and of things.”⁶⁵

We must reaffirm that our way of educating, consistent with our style of fellowship, encourages the exercise of equality

⁶⁴ Otaño, *Enseñar para Educar*. 50: “An educational community is a living school of the collaboration, teamwork, etc., absolutely necessary in our world.”

⁶⁵ “Educating together in the Catholic school: the shared mission of consecrated persons and lay faithful,” in *Characteristics*.

and inclusion, according to the example of the call of Jesus. In building family relationships based on welcoming all, without differences that marginalize or distance persons from one another, we claim to have a style of community spirit in the Church learned from the example of Jesus, but expressed also in the call and life of Mary. “‘Mary, of whom Jesus was born,’ our Founder repeated over and over to emphasize the place that is proper to her in Christian life, the place from which he contemplated her [time and again].”⁶⁶

Mary, with her openness to the action of God in her life, embodied openness and willingness to accept others as a distinguishing mark of her whole existence. With her serviceability to the work of God and his son, she inspires in us relations of encounter and loving closeness, not of domination or indifference, much less of intolerance and rigidity. These latter divide and separate people into categories for whatever false reason, so as to justify relationships of domination like those that betrayed Jesus himself. We are obliged to eradicate from our schools any relationships in which roles and responsibilities show signs of arrogant power.

The urgency of reaffirming our community spirit in our educational work also demands mature self-criticism in order to correct whatever runs contrary to it, not only in the manner of relationships but also in structures; otherwise we lose credibility and efficacy. Education that goes contrary to the style of com-

⁶⁶ Cortés, 13.

munity spirit born of the principle of the Incarnation seriously damages the transmission of the message of Jesus and of his mission, in which we participate according to the spirit of Mary.

■ Doing something for the Church for the glory of Jesus

A challenge for our educational work and our mission in the Church comes from these words of Father Chaminade that are still valid today: “Courage! ... There is question now of starting for good and of doing something for the glory of Jesus, our good Master.”⁶⁷ We can and we must continue to be committed not only to humanizing education but also to humanizing the Church. We understand that commitment this way precisely because of the way we understand the participation of Mary in the humanity of Jesus, the face of God. And to humanize education is to teach living together, creating a communion of lives, which in this stage of formation are led gently but firmly towards the fullness of human communion.

Father Chaminade was always interested in the future of the Church, which in the France of his times was very uncertain and shaky, and particularly so the role that youth ought to play in it. In that situation was born what is perhaps the most important of his intuitions and contributions to the concept of Church. He anticipated Vatican Council II in considering the laity as the primary addressees of his thinking about returning to them their

⁶⁷ Chaminade, “Letter to Marie-Thérèse de Lamourous, August 26, 1800.” *Letters*, vol. 2, no. 22.

leading place and role in the mission of the Church. He took as his inspiration and point of reference the image of the Church of the first centuries and entrusted to lay persons his dreams and plans. They were the first whom he organized in his foundational work, convinced as he was that “the ancient methods can no longer satisfactorily resolve our current problems. The world cannot return to its previous ways of doing things. The same lever needs to be applied, but with different fulcrums.”⁶⁸

This new fulcrum was the laity, men and women, with whom Father Chaminade started his revitalization of the gospel. He proposed not only a return to the idea of communion and sharing in the movement started by Jesus and the first Christian communities, but also a particular way of understanding and living that community spirit within the Marianist communities. Starting with this novel approach, he imprinted upon them a characteristic identity in a Marian fashion of understanding their action and witness of community spirit within the Church and for all of humanity. It had to do with a style rooted in the equality that creates community spirit, wherein differences generate complementarity and confrontation. This we have called “family spirit.” What are the demands of that family spirit at the present time for constructing the future?

⁶⁸ *The Spirit of Our Foundation*, vol. 3, according to the *Writings of Father Chaminade and the Original Documents of the Society: Works of the Society of Mary*. (Dayton: Mt. St. John Normal School, 1920). [Trans. from the French original: *L'esprit de notre foundation: les oeuvres de la Société d'après les écrits de M. Chaminade et les documents primitifs de la Société* (Nivelles : Havaux-Houdart, 1916). [page unknown].

For us, doing something for the Church for the glory of Jesus means offering a trustworthy witness in our educational institutions and, from there, throughout the entire Church, so that all human beings might believe in the gospel message of equality and inclusion. We embody the sign of Mary's goodness and courage in her proclamation of a new order of human relationships based on our status as brothers and sisters. Putting family spirit into action leads us to walk together in the same direction – preached and lived by Jesus and proclaimed by Mary as the first to enter into her son's dream – contrary to any discriminatory hierarchizing in human relationships.

■ Teaching effective solidarity

Our witness of community spirit involves and engages us in teaching an effective solidarity, a social commitment to the effort to eradicate from humanity the unjust situations that affect it.

It is not easy to persevere in this dream. If Marianist teachers don't put into practice a mysticism and an ideal of community spirit in each of their educational activities, the commitment can remain among their students as simply a youthful enthusiasm. And, as we have already said, this commitment really begins with the trustworthy witness of the educators themselves.

We intend to offer an education that can be an alternative to the modes of coexistence and the preoccupations of the rest

of the world. Thus it will be a sign of our seeking to build a society and a Church that are more human and, therefore, more communitarian and egalitarian, as is apparent in the Marian style of Church, which is creative of universal brotherhood.⁶⁹

The future of Marianist education presents us with a challenge, but far more with enthusiasm. We have merely to look at our sources in the person and thought of Father Chaminade, prophet, precursor of the type of community spirit towards which all of humanity and the Church must walk according to the principle of Incarnational equality. This alone gives credibility to Jesus and his vision. As Father Steffanelli puts it:

Far from joining the crowd of opportunists who capitalize on the immediate in order to gain something for themselves, Marianists seize the immediate as a means of moving ever closer to the attainment of a vision: a world in which the Reign of God continues to grow and expand through the living and striving of those who choose to remain faithful to God's Word – and to the Woman who first brought that Word into our world.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Cortés, 17-18 : “By its filial surrender to Mary in Jesus, the love of God becomes fraternal in order to reveal the Father. Marian sonship and universal fraternity go hand in hand in the Son. He is a brother because he is a son, and he is a son because he is a brother. And in this way the Son opens the door to the revelation and manifestation of the love of the Father. Becoming a son of Mary he makes himself a brother, and recognizing us as brothers, he makes us sons of the Father.... Jesus Christ gives us his divine Mother as our Mother so as to be our brother in every respect.”

⁷⁰ Steffanelli, 27.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the principle of the Incarnation mean in the educational work of our Catholic school? What consequences can we draw from it?
2. What image, what “face” of God do we hand on to our students:
 - in the teaching of curricular materials?
 - in religion class?
 - in all our school activities?
 - through our own attitudes?
3. Just what does the figure of *Mary* represent for the educational program of our school? And for our life and daily activities?
4. What does the expression of Father Chaminade mean for us: “*Teach in order to educate*”? What implications for our schoolwork does the conviction have that we must start with formation of the human in order to give credibility to the experience of God?
5. Is *respect* for everyone – students, teachers, co-workers, parents – a real value, an habitual attitude in our relationships? By what criteria are these relationships governed?

6. Is our pedagogical work as Marianist educators an *authoritative presence* in the midst of the society where we are present? Are we considered an *educational alternative* because we express with no ambiguity our option centered upon the human person?
7. Does our school seek simply to train men and women who will be academically qualified or do we intend to do something more? What is the more?
8. What are the demands currently placed upon our *family spirit*? Can it really be seen in your school? How is it manifested? How can it be improved?
9. Do we educate our students to pursue a society and a Church that will be more human, more communitarian and egalitarian, as would be apparent in the *Marian style of Church*? Are we really capable of creating in them the desire to establish fraternal relationships in society, to work in favor of those who are most needy, to establish peace and justice?

Chapter III

SOCIETY AND MARIANIST EDUCATION

Jorge Figueroa León

INTRODUCTION

At the base of our Marianist spirituality is the mystery of the Incarnation. The Founder expressed this in a phrase recognized by all: “Jesus Christ, son of God, become son of Mary for the salvation mankind.” We Marianists aspire to follow and proclaim the Jesus who “was made flesh” among the people of his own time in order to save all of us. From that perspective, the world is considered as an opportunity for missionary activity. We have always recognized the need to make known Jesus Christ through an apostolic work according to the needs of each time and place. In the time of the Founder that need was expressed in the Chaminade’s idea of “re-christianizing”; today we associate it with the call to a “new evangelization.”

We Marianists were born as a missionary family: “You are all missionaries and each sodality has a permanent mission.” Living in this world, we are called to build the Kingdom wherever we are. According to the *Historia general de la compañía de María*, the Society “was born to proclaim and support the

Catholic faith with the purpose of counteracting the new social phenomenon of the massive loss of religion, in the cultural context of Modernity; this mission could be exercised through every type of means and works.”⁷¹

The Society of Mary is not a teaching congregation, but since its very origin it was seen that education was one of the means best suited to proclaim the Kingdom of God. In a letter of 1822 Father Chaminade explained that

*Christian schools, directed according to the method adopted by the Institute of Mary and conducted by its religious destined for this good work, are a powerful means of reforming the people. The children there generally make such rapid progress and become so docile and Christian that they carry the good odor of virtue and religion into their respective families. The children become, as it were, apostles to their parents, and their apostolate always produces some happy fruit. That is what makes me call the schools a means of reforming the people.*⁷²

⁷¹ Antonio Gascón Aranda, *La compañía de María en el movimiento congregacional del siglo XIX (Fundación, misión y configuración institucional 1817-1875)*, vol. 1 of *Historia general de la compañía de María (marianistas)* (Madrid: SPM, 2007), 121. [The Society of Mary in the congregational movement of the 19th century (Foundation, mission and institutional configuration 1817-1875; vol. 1 of General history of the Society of Mary (Marianists)].

⁷² Chaminade, “Letter no. 203 – To Father Fréchar, Pastor of Colroy, June 18, 1822,” in *Letters*, vol. 1; see also Letter no. 388 – To Father Noailles, February 15, 1826, in *idem*, vol. 2, 177; see also a list of references to education in his letters in Joseph Lackner, *Chaminade: His Apostolic Intent and His Engagement with Schools, Instruction and Education: An Historical Portrait*, (Dayton: NACMS, 1999), 32, cited by Gascón, *Historia*, vol. 1, 124, n.69.

Through education, the Marianists understand that a better world can be built up and that, in order to accomplish this, culture and society are the terrains that cannot be neglected for making the gospel take flesh.

In the following pages we will draw out some lessons that the early experience of the first Marianists offer us. We will emphasize the indissoluble link that, for Marianist pedagogy, exists between evangelization and education, we shall stress the communitarian matrix of our educational praxis and we shall look at the goal of transformation towards which our pedagogical-pastoral program strives, giving birth to a just and fraternal world.

THE FOUNDER'S EXPERIENCE: EDUCATING PERSONS ALERT TO CHANGES

Father Chaminade lived in a time classified by historians as a “change of epoch.” The passage of the 18th century into the 19th century not only changed the form of government of states by also modified the ideas and conceptions of life, the organization of society, the family, religious beliefs, philosophy. The Enlightenment, Liberalism and the French Revolution, as historical phenomena, shaped a new world, a new way of understanding freedom, the participation of the people in the new order which the revolutionary ideas inaugurated.

It was the end of the *Ancien Régime*, an epoch of privilege for the nobility and of great inequalities and inequities, an epoch of loss of values and moral decadence, which affected all institutions, including the Church. The revolutionaries wanted to put an end to the abuses against the most vulnerable social groups, the “Third Estate” as they called it at the time, made up of farmers and lower classes in the cities who suffered exploitation and discrimination.

The Revolution opened up a world in which the principles of *liberty, equality and fraternity* were given special prominence, where the rights of individuals were strengthened and there began the recognition of their dignity in the laws and ordinances of the nation-states. Nevertheless, the quest for a more just and egalitarian society brought different groups into violent confrontations, groups defending their ideas with arms and imposing them by force. The Revolution brought with it violence and exclusion, persecutions and death.

The Catholic Church, particularly the hierarchy, was seen as an accomplice in the older state of things, due to the close relationships of power woven during the preceding centuries. Very few were concerned about the local presence of the clergy in the villages, where the religious shared the life of the simple people. The Revolution persecuted the Church and its clergy, obliging them to sign the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*, a law which intended to change priests and religious into public employees of the State, with no dependence upon Rome. Many priests rejected this attempt at control, refusing to sign the document, which was considered heretical, sacrilegious and schismatic by Pope Pius

VI, and maintained their fidelity to the universal Church. But by that refusal they became suspect of having counterrevolutionary ideas, were persecuted, imprisoned and in many cases executed. Those acts of repression made people forget the noble ideals of the movement and did indeed motivate a nostalgia for the monarchy, the royal power, the *Ancien Régime*. Father Chaminade was a target of these persecutions and moved from Mussidan to Bordeaux, where he lived for a time clandestinely, risking his life through his desire to continue his priestly ministry. The radicalization of the revolutionary process, with the Jacobins in power, forced the Founder into exile. He crossed the border and arrived in Saragossa, where he remained for three years before returning to France and undertaking the foundation of sodalities of lay Marianists.

The Founder happened to live in a time full of uncertainties and threats that he had to think through carefully in order to discern what kind of work and mission the Lord was asking of him as a priest:

*[At the age of 79, in 1839]... he tries to reread all that had happened during the complex era which he had lived through.... His charism makes sense only as a response to the challenges of an era. And it will continue to have value only if he has been capable of reading adequately the signs of the times through which God was speaking to him.*⁷³

⁷³ Lorenzo Amigo, *Formas de vida cristiana del carisma marianista*, (Madrid: SPM, 2003), 18-19.

Father Chaminade saw how a religious indifference that would affect the faith and morals of the people was building up as a consequence of the Revolution and especially of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Family participation in religious practices was being lost, as were assistance at celebrations of the sacraments. The faithful were drifting away from the parishes and the teachings of the Church. All that remained was a sporadic assistance at a few celebrations.

The Founder proposed to fight against these evils by requesting and receiving the title of “Missionary Apostolic” from the Holy See and by organizing groups of persons who would dedicate their lives to proclaiming the gospel, to living in community and giving witness to their faith. They were to do so while immersed in everyday life, dedicated to serve a people that needed to be delivered from their ignorance and to recover their virtues.

To erect a powerful barrier to hold back the torrent of evil, Heaven has inspired me to solicit from the Holy See at the beginning of this century letters conferring on me the title of Missionary Apostolic so as to revive or to rekindle everywhere the divine torch of faith, while presenting on all sides to an astonished world, imposing masses of Catholic Christians of every age, sex, and condition, who, united in special associations, practice our holy religion without vanity or human respect, in all the purity of its dogmas and morals.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Chaminade, “Letter to Pope Gregory XVI, September 16, 1839,” cited in Quentin Hakenewerth, ed. *Marianist Origins: An Anthology of basic documents for formation in Marianist identity* (Rome: 1990), 37.

Father Chaminade was especially concerned with the situation of poor children and with youth. These were the children who could not afford to attend school and who lived in the streets, where they were the prey of abuse and abandonment, as well as of the exploitation by a society that did not protect their rights and employed them in pick-up jobs. They were little beggars who had difficulty getting food, clothing and shelter. The story of the little chimneysweeps who worked in Bordeaux in inhuman conditions is well known.

The first “sodalists” realized from the beginning that instruction and education were the answer to these social problems, that the town needed to pay attention to these needs. They founded schools for the common people in many towns, where they also welcomed the children who, at a certain time of year, depending upon the farm work, came in from the country. These schools also had an impact upon the family, since the instruction of the students also got to the parents. ”[These schools] are a powerful means of reforming the people,”⁷⁵ said Father Chaminade. The teaching was done with great respect for the dignity of the children, in a time when corporal punishment was common as a method of correcting conduct; Father Chaminade did not accept any physical or psychological punishment that entailed a humiliation of the child.

There was a great concern about the methods and contents of what was taught in the schools. The classes were divided

⁷⁵ Chaminade, “Letter 203 to Father Fréchar, Pastor of Colroy, June 18, 1822.”

according to grades and monitors were named from among the students themselves, so that they might work together as a team, where not merely the individual learned, but the entire group was being educated. Classroom topics were combined with practical sessions aimed at the students' learning of a trade that would prepare the graduates to use the appropriate tools for their future employment. The intent was to generate learning in the public schools that prepared for work in commerce, in industry and principally in agriculture.⁷⁶

The youth also needed special attention. Joblessness, the limited possibilities of studying and family problems were the causes of the vices and corruption that threatened the youth in the cities. For that reason, the youth were invited and welcomed into the church, which became not merely a place for celebration of the faith, but also a meeting place for reflection on the principal ethical, moral and social topics that were of concern at that time. With debates, forums for discussion, and chats, the young people were instructed, educated and pulled away from the evils that held the majority benighted in their ignorance.

The preparation of teachers was also a concern of Father Chaminade. To that end he devoted himself to founding normal schools where pedagogical training was complemented by a philosophical formation. In that way the teachers were prepared to respond to the menace of rationalism that was trying to destroy the faith.

⁷⁶ Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 21.

Despite the difficulties and lack of funds, Father Chaminade lived through the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period, seeing the situation as an opportunity. Unlike those who were nostalgic for the days of the monarchy ruling by divine right, he firmly believed that something new was being born, that it was necessary to adequately decipher the signs of the changing times in order to bring new ideas to bear on a new society. In his judgment, new methods were needed, new strategies, new tools for reading those changes and acting accordingly. Two expressions of the Founder gave the coordinates of this attitude vis-à-vis the world that was opening up in front of him: “We must be attentive to the times in which we live” and *Nova bella elegit Dominus*, “The Lord has chosen new warfare”: in these new times the Lord asks of us new strategies, new methods.

The life experience of Father Chaminade took place in a specific era and society. But it had some elements that transcended those particular circumstances. What lessons can we draw from his unique path in the face of History, from his way of confronting the challenges and possibilities that the social setting presented? At the very least, there are the following:

1. Learning to educate and to evangelize in different settings

Marianist educators and their educational undertaking are attentive to reading the signs of the times, the distinctive character of each setting, the possibilities and the challenges that present themselves in the time and place in which they work. With great creativity they adapt their methods and

strategies in an assertive approach to those who are being educated, in order to discover what they need and require to achieve success in the work of education and evangelization. For this reason, Marianist education varies according to the cultural exigencies of each setting in which it is present. It is enriched by the local setting, promoting respect for local identity and development of its values. Likewise, it facilitates the exchange between teachers and students to foster a global vision. Marianist educators are sensitive to preserving what each community has of its own, and to using whatever of it serves to promote integral and global development.

From the experience of the Founder, Marianist spirituality derived this principle applicable to education: be critical of the times and fight against all that threatens the human person and faith in God, but without neglecting to discover the opportunities and the positive elements that each era offers. One must find the means to exploit the opportunities offered by the new times. What the Founder considered necessary in order to confront the changes was an attitude of openness, looking to the future rather than to the past. He valued his acquired experience, but as a tool for proposing new alternatives in the face of new challenges.

One of his biographers described it thus:

He was a respecter of tradition as much as it became him to be, and while faithfully preserving the essence and the elements that never vary, he often ran the risk of challenging the

*incredulity, and sometimes the opposition of the devotees of routine, by boldly modifying forms and methods that are never fixed and ought not to be unchangeable, but which should be adapted to variations in time and place and manner.*⁷⁷

2. The preferential option for children and youth

Marianist education has the goal of supporting society, focusing upon a preferential attention to children and youth.

Without discrimination Marianist education serves the lower and middle classes, people of different social and cultural backgrounds, with diverse talents and capacities. The differences provide a richness and complementarity at the service of integration into a world of diversity. To each one the gospel message is offered by means of a quality integral education. There is an effort to do excellent pedagogical and formative work so that the students might achieve the development of all their potentialities and talents. There is a solid physical and intellectual formation, as well as a formation, in moral values. It tries to develop abilities and attitudes that each student might be capable of exploiting to the maximum his capacities and aptitudes.

Fundamental to Marianist pedagogy is respect for the person of the student, the valuing of his rights and duties from child-

⁷⁷ Rousseau, Henri., *Guillaume-Joseph Chaminade, fondateur des Marianistes* (Paris: Perrin, 1913), 160. Trans. by John E. Garvin as *William Joseph Chaminade, Founder of the Society of Mary*. (Dayton, OH & Clayton, MO: Brothers of Mary, 1914). 436. French original cited in Lizarraga, *Educar: Rasgos*, 80n.

hood onwards. This encourages a style of formation wherein all are responsible for creating congenial and harmonious environments, where joy, self-esteem, teamwork and solidarity are attitudes that enrich one's personal and social growth.

3. The search for new approaches

For the reasons just given, Marianist education from its beginnings was especially preoccupied with research into and the practice of pedagogical methods that fostered the learning of each and every one of the students, with their special and particular needs. At the very beginning, this education, focused on student needs, was already emerging in the pedagogical ideas of Father Lalanne, who promoted

... curricula in which classical studies were combined with modern subjects. At the same time he renewed the pedagogy and didactics of the various materials by the use of active methods, stimulating the students through emulation and not by punishment, instituting honor rolls, creating a literary academy, organizing recreational-cultural events and award ceremonies.⁷⁸

Marianist education seeks the development, in children and youth, of a deep and reflective interior life that permits a critical look at one's own personal processes of growth and at the challenges that confront one every day. As Father Chaminade himself noted, "The essential is the interior."

⁷⁸ Gascón, Historia, 150.

4. Emphasis on appropriate teacher training

For a good education, it is not enough to have good curricula, appropriate textbooks or excellent teaching resources. The key factor is the teacher himself and his pedagogical preparation. It is not sufficient to have merely the desire to teach or good intentions concerning the students, although these desires and intentions are quite necessary. A solid formation in pedagogy is required.

As the times and characteristics of the students change, pedagogy updates its knowledge about how students learn and what is necessary for them to learn. This demands a great deal of teacher training and updating, since the teachers need to understand and manage new pedagogical theories and methods in order to meet the new needs and to offer what society demands of the schools.

The renewal of teaching methods occurs at the same time that science and technology are making available advanced knowledge and instruments. New tools and learning aids are appearing. The initial training and the updating of Marianist teachers through their professional activity are absolutely necessary for responding to the challenge of educating in a changing world.

Marianist education needs educators open to the changes, ready to revise their praxis, to learn and unlearn with their peers in the on-going search for new methods and resources, all with the aim of motivating learning using new strategies.

If we look at the world as a whole, we can see that today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we face a situation as challenging as that which Father Chaminade and the first Marianists faced. For many historians, we are living today in a true change of eras, accelerating at a pace that does not allow time for understanding how far change will reach, nor even to imagine what its consequences will be. It is the irruption of postmodernism and the paradigm shift to a culture that promotes the individual, which defends differences and plurality, which relativizes truth, that is wary of utopias and ideologies, which is transmitted through multiple forms of mass media, which uses digital technology as its primary means of communication and dissemination, which is governed by the logic of the market in an integrated and globalized world. We are already living in a new era that challenges our Marianist education and its intention of proclaiming the gospel, of educating in order to evangelize. But that is the mission to which we are called, in the words of the Founder, who told us that “we are all missionaries” and that we have “a commission to work at the salvation of [our] brothers in the world.”⁷⁹

Every Marianist educational center strives toward the evangelization and the integral formation of the person. That requires an

⁷⁹ Chaminade, “Letter 1193 Circular to the Priests of the Society, March 8, 1840”; and “Letter 1163 to the Preachers of Retreats, August 24, 1839.” Cited in Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 29n.

on-going, profound and competent dialogue between faith and culture, in a process in which faith becomes inculturated and culture is illuminated by the gospel. God calls us, as educators, to work at the spread of the Kingdom of God. We consider education as an important means of evangelization at the service of the Church for transforming the world and people, inviting them to accept the good news of Jesus Christ. In order to achieve this goal, we must make use of instruments, contents, practices and coordinated planning. It involves a great effort to bring together personal efforts and richness as part of a strong teamwork. This, in turn, poses an enormous challenge of integration, first, the personal (arising from the idea which each educator has of his own task and mission); then, the disciplinary, between the knowledge bases of the various disciplines and the light of the gospel; and finally, an integration of all the educators, so that we might provide to our students an integral witness of academic quality and human sensitivity.

The overall objective is not covered simply by having catechism periods or religion classes. Nevertheless, many Catholic educational institutions believe that such scheduling is sufficient for having authentic platforms of evangelization and formation, when in reality they are using an institutional dynamic of parallel tracks: the academic on one side, the pastoral on other channels. That is a framework that can work in the short run and which can mitigate tensions, but which has enormous costs: it “locks” the evangelizing message into the campus ministry department, “acting as if” we were evangelizing, relying on the volunteerism of the good folks we count on for

educating, but raising contradictions, weakening identity, avoiding having to take strong and prophetic decisions....

The Marianist educational tradition has always emphasized that “education is more a question of atmosphere than of teaching.” Our schools are not Catholic just because we teach Catholic doctrine alongside other materials, but because in them everything is taught with a Christian spirit and from a Christian perspective. We could synthesize this in a single formula: in Marianist pedagogy, we educate while evangelizing and we evangelize while educating.

All the tasks undertaken by the educators and offered by the Marianist school are motivated by this objective. We educate in order to evangelize the world. For that purpose, we must use all the means that are at our disposal and all the possibilities offered to us by society, remembering that “evangelization is the transmission of a life, of values, of attitudes”⁸⁰ and therefore it requires principally the living and credible witness of the educators.

**III | EDUCATING TO LIVE IN
COMMUNITY, WITNESS TO THE
KINGDOM IN THE WORLD**

Education is not principally an activity of shooting stars, nor of brilliant ideas, nor of technical studies...but teamwork,

⁸⁰ Amigo, 107.

*the work of a community that focuses on the child. It is the community that educates.*⁸¹

From its very beginnings, Marianist spirituality has encouraged the creation of communities on all levels: among the religious, the fathers of families, the teachers, the students. This work has been inspired by the witness of Father Chaminade, who envisioned and organized groups of Christians capable of serving their brothers and sisters, while living together fraternally. In doing so they are able “to present to the world the spectacle of a people of saints, and to prove by that fact that today, as in the primitive Church, the Gospel can be practiced in all the rigor of the spirit and of the letter.”⁸²

Life in community is the place where we can witness to the love and fraternity between equals; it is the opportunity to share our talents and correct our weaknesses. In a postmodern individualistic and ego-centered culture, community life is the proof that the Kingdom can be built up and that it is necessary to bring the message of the gospel to life in order to proclaim it in witnessing to the people around us.

Our fraternal life is where we show the authenticity of our way of life. God gives us the brothers he wishes to. Forming a community of life is a priority. There is no Christian life without

⁸¹ Lizarraga, citado por Gustavo Magdalena, *El Espíritu del educador* (Madrid: PPC, 2007), 123.

⁸² Chaminade, “Letter #388 to Father Noailles, February 15, 1826,” cited by Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 49.

*fraternal communion. But there is no fraternal communion without a community life.*⁸³

Marianist educational works must be recognized as “educational communities,” institutional places where there is a visible relationship of collaboration, of acceptance, of understanding and solidarity. These communities are communities of faith, which share in the joy of celebrations, which are formed around the content of our beliefs, which proclaim and announce Jesus through Mary, communities where the love of God is clearly evident. They are communities where we share life, joys, hopes and difficulties, spaces where we share our experiences and our feelings.

The key persons in this educational process are the teachers. Upon them rests the principal responsibility of educating the children and youth in the school. Professional competence and personal integrity are the essential requirements for fulfilling an educational mission that intends to bring about the development of the students, both children and youth. “The essential remains the teacher; and in his person, all his literary, scientific and didactic tools, though indispensable, are less important than his moral and religious qualities.”⁸⁴ Teachers must cultivate their professional and technical skills. Continuing education must be among the priorities of their professional development activities, but at the same time per-

⁸³ Amigo, 133.

⁸⁴ Hoffer, 455.

sonal growth must be one of their on-going concerns. These are objectives to be achieved together by the school's teaching faculty. Scientific evidence shows that teachers learn more from reflection among peers about their praxis than from individualized academic study. To encourage the creation of time and space for the teachers to share their experiences, to study together, to program and evaluate their educational activities is to guarantee effective work. "In educating students, more important than what the teacher says is what he himself is."⁸⁵

The teachers in a Marianist school develop their professional and formative activities by participating in work groups. While their teaching work in the classroom may be done as individuals, the lesson preparations, the evaluation of results, the search for didactic strategies and the resolution of problems will enjoy a greater richness when the teacher's review of them is done as part of a team of peers. Meeting in work groups, the teachers profit from sharing their experiences, their abilities, their teaching materials. In this way their professional work is enriched, as is the effectiveness of the students' learning.

But the faculty of a Marianist school are more than just a professional work team. They form a community of life where, beyond the complex social situations they have to deal with in their support of the students and their families, they share their own life experiences that each one brings from his own

⁸⁵ Kessler, Albert, cited in Ángel Tuñón (coord.), *Educadores en los colegios marianistas*, (Madrid: SPM, 2002), 33.

individual personal and familial background. For the educators in a Marianist school to have a community “as a reference point to be relied upon professionally and personally is important; in it is found an ambiance for growth and feedback, a place for sharing experiences and for dreaming with others, a really critical place for developing an educational style.”⁸⁶

The teachers are also able to develop faith communities in which they celebrate, pray and evangelize, and witness to their Christian commitment. Relying upon those faith communities and drawing from their own personal experience of sharing their faith, they can accompany students, parents and guardians in catechesis, in community celebrations, in their processes of growth in the Christian life.

But educational activity is not simply the task of one “appointed” group, but also the work of many others. The first educators are the parents. Upon them rests the responsibility of educating their children within the bosom of the family. That is where the deepest values, fundamental convictions and attitudes towards life are transmitted. But the family, which has been the first and most important institution as the foundation of society, is today undergoing a great qualitative transformation that renders its traditional functions difficult. “The multiform situation of the family today means that, within our schools, we have to question the implicit validity of that statement...: ‘the first educators of their children are

⁸⁶ Magdalena, 129-130.

the parents.”⁸⁷ Our educational works have the challenge of encouraging the process of formation for the young families who enroll their children into the first levels of pre-school education by offering them opportunities for reflection in parent groups where they can share their experiences, their successes and their failures. The Marianist school can also give support to those broken families in which the children and youth are exposed to situations of affective and emotional vulnerability. Restraint and specialized professional help can be valuable alternatives.

The parents and *guardians* of students in a Marianist school are called upon to collaborate in the formation of an educational community. They share in the same task of educating the students. United by the fact that their sons and daughters are in the same class, they make an effort to participate actively in the periodic meetings where the results of the educational process are analyzed and they maintain an on-going communication with the teachers. Within their parents' group, they are actively engaged in supporting families who have financial or health problems, or who just need companionship. They participate enthusiastically in campus ministry activities, in family catechesis and in community celebrations. They are organized in associations or clubs that permit them to develop their participation in and collaboration with the school.

⁸⁷ Magdalena, *Levadura en el mundo. La educación para el siglo XXI* (Buenos Aires: Clar-etiana, 2010).

The staff personnel responsible for services and business administration are also educators in a Marianist educational work. Although their activities are not in direct or systematic contact with the students, their daily circulation in corridors, offices, dining rooms, and schoolyards offers excellent educational opportunities for the children and youth. A greeting from the doorman, the gentle attention of a librarian, the friendly treatment by a secretary are all forms of witness that make an impact upon the student who learns from them.

In this community spirit, all the Marianist educational works recognize that the center of their concerns and efforts are the students. One of the objectives of our educational program is growth in sociability and fraternity, so that each one might see in the other his brother or sister. Our students spend a good part of the day with their classmates. They have the opportunities to share in their school work, in recreations, in sports and in extra-curricular activities. The time they pass together allows them to create long-lasting and deep bonds of friendship. Many of them, after graduation, retain those bonds and reunite to recall and celebrate their school years together. Respect and tolerance must be the values that regulate their conduct in community. There must be participation and teamwork in academics, campus ministry and sports. Competitiveness is acceptable only as motivation for attaining group results. The students of a Marianist school are organized into associations or clubs that represent their concerns before internal and external authorities, as an exercise in citizenship.

Marianist educational works are communities of communities, where people live together as in a family. The Marianists who animated the educational works from the very beginning insisted upon the idea that the environment encountered by the children in school must resemble that of their home, where they find “on one side authority, affection and parental sacrifice, and on the other, respect, filial obedience and love.”⁸⁸ Only thus is a true education of children and youth possible, in an environment where they feel loved and respected, experiencing demands but encouraged in difficulties, loved by their educators the way their parents love them, as Mary loved her son Jesus. It is not a question of replacing the students’ own families, but of creating conditions in which education is possible: acceptance, dialogue, freedom, simplicity, joy, appreciation or encouragement, understanding, effort, trust.

IV | **EDUCATING FOR TRANSFORMING THE WORLD AND BUILDING UP THE KINGDOM**

Mary knew how and when to be present to those who needed her: Jesus, her kinswoman Elizabeth, the Apostles. Following her example, we Marianists are committed and willing to work

⁸⁸ Joseph Simler, « Notice historique sur la Société de Marie de Paris » [Circular 55] (Bar-le-Duc : Œuvre de Saint-Paul, 1891), 49, cited in Lizarraga, *Educar. Rasgos*, 18.

to make the world better. We do it by accepting Father Chaminade's invitation to "work for the salvation of our brothers."⁸⁹

Marianist education seeks to form persons who are committed to the world in which they live, to the transformation of unjust structures and the conditions of inequality in society. Children and youth are educated to be able to insert themselves into their communities and be a living witness of the gospel in their relationship with their brothers and sisters.

The Marianist school is organized and functions in such a way as to give life to the values of collaboration

*... by establishing just internal institutional structures. Through lucid organizational plans, manuals of operation, and internal regulations, we insure that institutional processes are just and collaborative. Our mission statements and general educational policies articulate clear, fair criteria to guide matters such as student and teacher evaluation, salaries, and dismissals. Such actions promote solidarity, reconciliation, and cooperation in the educational community.*⁹⁰

The Marianist school is distinguished by the quality integral education it offers, and for the equitable or equal opportunities for access and treatment of those who enter its classrooms.

⁸⁹ Chaminade, "Letter 1163, August 24, 1839"; cf. also "Letter 1193, March 8, 1840," cited in Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 29.

⁹⁰ Office of Education, General Administration, Society of Mary – Marianists, *Characteristics of Marianist Education [CME]*, (Rome: 1996), 25-26.

Particular attention is given to those students with learning disabilities and deficient social, economic or cultural backgrounds.

Accepting the concern of Jesus and the call of the Church to give preferential attention to the poor, solidarity and service are established as permanent values and attitudes in our works. Families who themselves are undergoing difficulties are served through solidarity assistance, scholarships and both personal and spiritual accompaniment. Our students “learn to serve by serving” in solidarity initiatives in the community surrounding the school. They participate in both local and global campaigns for promotion of human rights, they are trained in the Social Doctrine of the Church so as to give content to their solidarity activities and to prepare them for committing themselves to be agents of change.

Justice and equity are fundamental values to be defended in a world where individualism and egotism abound in the relationships among persons and social groups. We Marianists respect and promote the dignity of persons, whose development is only possible in a society with just structures, where there is respect for the weakest, and solutions to social problems are sought through peaceful means. Advocating equity, Marianist education tries to offer more to those who have greater needs. In our schools we live the Christian commitment to attend to the needs of the poor and the marginalized through direct solidarity assistance and through the formation of persons whose vocation is dedicated to rendering service. We educate

in order to serve the poor and the marginalized, we study the causes of injustice, we organize and support campaigns and initiatives that seek solutions to social problems. Immersed in the local community, the Marianist school puts its locale and resources at the disposition of the neighborhood for the social, cultural, pastoral and recreational needs of those who live there. In this way the students and their families bond with the local community in which they live.

Special care is to be taken in the formation of the children and youth in citizenship. The study of political, social and economic issues, combined with a climate of respect, tolerance and participation, are the best instruments for forming future citizens who are going to live together in a democratic atmosphere with rights and duties. It is essential that we form persons who are capable of accepting differences, of developing tolerance and openness. In a world ever more interconnected, education must provide both the abilities and the attitudes for living in a permanent state of dialogue, for engaging in teamwork, for collaborating in projects, for making decisions through consensus, for seeking the truth through coming to agreement and for appreciating the contribution of others over against one's own opinion or conviction.

Globalization as a worldwide process of integration is a phenomenon that for Marianist education represents a major challenge to openness and adaptation. The presence of our schools throughout the world is a generous response of inculturation and acceptance of the expressions of each local

culture. Marianist educators are careful to appreciate the contributions, the interchange, the integration of different local and global experiences that promote an integral education in a changing world.

Care of the environment appears as an important value for Marianist education which, from a Christian faith perspective, sees the world as the place which God has given us as a gift and to which we owe respect and care. As inhabitants of this world we have the obligation to improve the dangerous and deteriorating condition of the areas of nature that we are occupying and overexploiting with our activities. That is not merely the responsibility of the authorities, of governments or of leaders of ecological institutions, but of all those who occupy space on the planet. The creation of an ecological conscience in our students is one objective of Marianist education, which can be achieved through rigorous study, campaigns and activities, such as recycling of materials, cleanliness of public spaces, promotion and membership in international campaigns of NGO's, among other initiatives. God has given us a beautiful place in which to live; we must care for it and preserve for future generations.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What lessons for our own times can we draw from the way in which Father Chaminade confronted the challenges and opportunities that the times in which he lived presented?
2. *A Marianist institution is not a Catholic school nor a platform for evangelization simply because it teaches Catholic doctrine among other subject matters, but because in it everything is taught in a Christian spirit and from a Christian perspective. Do we think of our own school that way?*
3. Do we teachers in our school have a time and place for sharing our experiences, for joint teacher training, for evaluating our educational activity...? Do we encourage this type of activity? Do the faculty of the school truly form a working team?
4. *Has the faculty come to form a community as a reference point to be relied upon professionally and personally, an ambiance for growth and feedback, a place for sharing experiences and for dreaming with others, a really critical place for developing an educational style...? Can we get there? Would that be desirable? Is it also for some a reference point for living out their personal faith?*
5. Do our students find in the school authority, affection, parental sacrifice, respect? Is it for them an environment where they feel loved and respected, experiencing demands

but encouraged in difficulties, loved by their educators? Is it for them an environment of acceptance, dialogue, freedom, simplicity, joy, appreciation and encouragement, understanding, effort, trust...?

6. How do the parents share in the building up of the *educational community* in the school? What is our perception as teachers of their way of acting? Do the parents value the work of the teachers?
7. Through what means does the school itself help in the formation of the parents? Can this be improved?
8. Do the non-teaching personnel of the school (business administration and service personnel, coaches, campus ministers,...) feel identified with its educational mission?
9. In what way does our institution care for the weakest or neediest members (students, families) of our educational community?
10. Are we training our students well to be positive agents of change in society? Are we cultivating their social, civic, ecological sensibilities...?

Chapter IV

THE MARIANIST EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTION

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Gustavo Magdalena

THE SCOPE OF MARIANIST EDUCATION

Since its beginnings, education has been a fundamental activity for socialization of individuals, for broadening their life horizons and for the transmission of common standards and values.

It is, however, useful to distinguish between the educational task itself and the place where it is carried out. While education itself has always existed, the surroundings in which it has taken place has varied throughout history: the village, the temple, the group of disciples gathered around the master teacher, the monasteries. With the appearance of the universities in the 12th/13th centuries and especially starting from the Renaissance, there arose in Western Europe various types of educational establishments, for which the nation states, by fits and starts, were taking over responsibility. Little by little the school came to be the educational instrument *par excellence*, the privileged agency for the transmission of knowledge and the official tool for establishing, preserving and sustaining standards and values.

At the beginning of the 19th century, in some countries of Western Europe the school was transformed into a social institution of increasing size. An institution is an organism which performs a function of public interest, which gives it prestige and respect. Once instituted, it is considered as something established, founded, solid, representative and important.

Understanding the school as institution meant trying to give clarity, solidity and uniformity to the educational systems that arose in that epoch.

Political, economic and cultural changes proclaimed the beginning of an era of zeal for “civilizing” in the pursuit of “progress.” It was a new epoch that promoted efficiency, rationality and public utility and needed a school that would provide the content, the organization and the ethos necessary to cement those values. The modern school was organized with a particular imprint, a product of state action, which shaped it as a political tool.

The educational institution was converted into a special organization, hierarchical and politically important, by means of which the states work at the transmission of their culture to children and adolescents in order to train them as good citizens and efficient workers. Nevertheless, in spite of the strong tendency of various governments to try to monopolize educational offerings, the lack of sufficient state resources in this field allowed for competing forces from various sectors of society to found and animate schools. In particular, some new religious congregations saw a double movement, political and cultural, that gave them the opportunity to enter into the world of education: on the one hand, the growing interest for expanding the levels of instruction of the citizens and the shortage of state resources for adequately satisfying that interest; on the other hand, the growing secularization that required that the religious orders find their place in the world coming to birth by developing activities that were in the “public interest.”

This new situation was understood clearly by Father Chaminade and his first disciples, who moved rapidly into the animation and creation of educational institutions. For the Society of Mary, the schools were transformed into historical-institutional incarnations to fulfill a mission. Antonio Gascón says it well: that these embodiments “condition the possibility and real effectiveness of our mission. These embodiments were places where the administration, the regulations, the finances and the work of teaching are intrinsic components of life and mission, where these conditions are intrinsic to the Modernity into which we were born.”⁹¹

The post-revolutionary scene, with the political growth of the middle class, the spread of new ideas and knowledge, the transformation of the urban landscape, the appearance of new economic undertakings and their repercussion upon the organization of society, necessarily had pastoral implications. Chaminade was conscious of the fact that to re-evangelize France he had to call upon strategies that were quite different from the traditional ones, and had to do so in apparently secular environments, among them the school. From its beginnings, the Society of Mary adopted the objectives that Modernity had established for the schools (transmission of the culture to the new generations, training of good citizens, appropriate preparation for serving in society), but rethinking

⁹¹ Gascón, “Significado y origen del apostolado docente en el carisma misionero de la Compañía de María,” conference in the Meeting of Assistants for Education, Rome, November 12, 2008.

them as means for evangelization. This spiritual foundation of the first Marianist schools was wonderfully articulated in the letter sent by Father Chaminade to Father Chevaux in February 1834. On that occasion, the Founder recalled to him that “Teaching is but a means to make use of in order to fulfill our mission, to introduce everywhere, so to say, the spirit of faith and of religion and to multiply Christians.”⁹²

This missionary imprint was consecrated in the first *Constitutions of the Society of Mary* (1839) where it was stated that “The Society of Mary teaches only in order to educate in a Christian manner; for this reason all undertakings have been classified under the title of Christian Education.” (Art. 256) That remains true still today, as the current *Rule of Life of the Society of Mary* shows: “For us, education is a privileged means of formation in faith.” (Art. 74.) In the schools, the Marianists find their primary instrument for carrying out their mission of evangelization.⁹³

After a span of almost two hundred years, Marianist education is alive and well in a large number of diverse works that try to

⁹² “Letter No. 725 to Father Chevaux, February 7, 1834.”

⁹³ Father Jean-B. Lalanne, the first Marianist religious and a famous educator, left us a statement which sheds light upon the original wager of the Society of Mary on education: “In the state of affairs in which the world finds itself today, in order to remake it there is no means more universal or more efficacious than education. I would have liked, it would have been my preference, to devote myself to preaching, but there would have been much less advantage for the Church from sermons than from education.”

be faithful to their Chaminadian mission.⁹⁴ A number of works fall under the title of “formal education” (89 schools, with levels from pre-school through the *bacillerato* and technical certificates, as well as 3 universities), enrolling more than 100,000 students and served by almost 10,000 educators, including religious and lay. Besides those institutions, there have developed more than 30 works of “non-formal” education,” in an attempt to address the right to education of men and women who did not enter or who dropped out of the traditional system. To this assemblage of educational works we must add the *Grupo Editorial SM*, the student residences and the collaborations in various educational projects. This is a noteworthy assemblage and helps us to sense the presence of the Marianist charism in so many classrooms, meeting rooms, workshops, convents and other venues where day by day our people expend their efforts in educating and evangelizing, in evangelizing and educating.

|| THE MEANING OF A MARIANIST SCHOOL

From the very beginning, Marianist schools have striven to be good schools. To be a good school presupposes the acceptance of a set of goals and values: the integral advancement of the person, dialogue with the culture, the process of humanization

⁹⁴ The following data come from the conference of José M. Alvira, SM, “Presente y futuro de la educación marianista”, given at the Marianist Pedagogical Conference in Buenos Aires (Argentina) on September 10, 2010.

of the person and of society.⁹⁵ But each time and place requires a constant revision of the forms and practical implementations of those purposes. Thus, being a “good school” is not a definition crystallized at a given moment, but demands ongoing updating according to an intelligent discernment of the cultural, pedagogical and planning demands of each society. This practice of critical analysis and adaptation to the current situation, which has gone on in our schools since the beginning of the Marianist Family, is an invitation to creativity and reinforcement of the ideals which animate a school. In that practice lies one of the secrets that make Marianist schools good schools.

So then, what does it mean today to be a “good school”? What are the basic and essential features that an educational institution must develop in order to assure good student learning? The McKinsey Report of 2007 describes the four fundamental conditions that an educational system – and consequently a school – must have in order to assure the educational success in its population:⁹⁶

- Maintain high expectations for learning and the possibilities of learning for each member of the school.
- Establish clear and rigorous standards that indicate pre-

⁹⁵ Lizarraga, *Cartas Pedagógicas* (Madrid: SPM, 1996), 17-18.

⁹⁶ McKinsey & Company, *How the world's best-performing schools come out on top* (2007), accessed October 15, 2014, at <http://mckinseysociety.com/how-the-worlds-best-performing-schools-come-out-on-top/>

cisely what it is that one is trying to do in educating and what is the state of the situation in each field and level of the institution.

- Provide differentiated aids that guarantee a broad coverage and care for students with special needs and for each of the teachers.
- Maintain a favorable environment for on-going development of the educational work, comfortable physical conditions, appropriate didactic materials and good equipment.

These four dimensions do not function separately, but are integrated and act systemically, becoming the sustaining buttresses of an educational program consistent with a complex and changing world.

1. A quality institution

A good school is focused on the quality of its programs, physical spaces, timing and plans. The concept “quality education” has many definitions and arouses fiery polemics among experts. It forms part, nevertheless, of the very heart of Marianist pedagogy: “The Marianist educational philosophy favors the development of quality institutions which promote a solid liberal arts education and combine it with professional and technical education as the needs of their students require.”⁹⁷ Our schools are called to be quality institutions where we try

⁹⁷ *CME*, no.32.

to do things very well. In a good school one cannot tolerate atmospheres that admit poor motivating, mediocre work or loss of time.

As we find ourselves well into the 21st century, a quality school has certain essential marks:

- Adequate understanding of the actual situation, in particular of the needs of the students, since the work is centered upon the outcomes of the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students.
- Planning; clear and progressive objectives; simple processes that permit attainment of the goals that are set.
- Educational leadership that brings together, guides, articulates meaning, gives witness to and broadens personal and community horizons.
- Systemic management of resources that leads to an efficient administration at the service of the common good.
- Management of results (evaluation), in order to obtain concrete and realistic information that offers us material for continued improvement.

But these marks are hollow if the schools lack a profound sense of the meaning proclaimed in their goals and aspirations, which themselves must be in touch with the deepest concerns of the men and women of their time.

As we have seen, Father Chaminade conceived of education as a means to evangelization: “If we teach the sciences and the arts, it is only to teach at the same time the science of salvation.”⁹⁸

This clarity in referring educational work to the mission of evangelizing did not involve any disregard of academic and pedagogical requirements. On the contrary, the Marianist educational tradition tells us that if a school wants to be a tool for evangelization, it must be a good school and fulfill the principal goal of education: “help the person to find himself and be capable of revealing himself just as he is (...), to awaken a man’s deep inner potential and to respect his qualities, to make them flourish.”⁹⁹ To achieve this, Marianist education has some *key elements* for developing a good school.

The first of these key elements is the centrality of the *pedagogical relationship between the educator and the student*. Chaminade indicated this in the same letter to Chevaux when he wrote: “No success can be expected with a pupil unless he has first been won over and, up to a certain point, is esteemed and loved.” As Steiner says so well, “Good teaching is based upon the exchange, the *eros* of mutual trust and even love, where the master learns from his disciple while he is teaching him. The intensity of this dialogue generates friendship in the highest

⁹⁸ “Letter no. 725 to Father Chevaux, February 7, 1834.”

⁹⁹ Lizarraga, *Cartas*, 139-140.

sense of that word.”¹⁰⁰ The educational quality of a Marianist school is directly proportional to the richness of the pedagogical bond that is established between its educators and the students, a bond which is developed with meaning and perseverance, beginning with respect for the individuality of each person and his dignity. It is a bond based on the proper preparation of classes, the orderly exposition of contents which awaken curiosity and encourage reflection, the intelligent kind of questioning that permits a real seeking for truth, critical observation of the world around us and collaborative teamwork. It is a bond that develops into a source of trust, so that each student might arrive at being himself and discover that learning is the work of one’s entire lifetime.

The interchange and the trust do not arise simply by chance, but are founded in a well-grounded pedagogical style. The Founder and his collaborators put a special emphasis on the development of a “Method” of teaching that gave guidelines to the Marianist teachers. Its first edition dates from 1824 and the succession of corrected and enlarged versions (1831, 1841, 1851) shows the desire for perfecting it and the priority assigned to education since the very beginning of the Society of Mary. A good resume of the principles of that Method was given us by Father Lalanne:

¹⁰⁰ George Steiner, *Lessons of the Masters* in The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 2001-2002, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003). The quotation is a reverse translation from the Spanish edition, *La lección de los maestros* in Biblioteca de ensayo, serie mayor 36 (Madrid: Siruela, 2005). The original was not available at the time of translation.

A young man applying himself to the acquisition of a science, and endowed with memory, a spirit of observation, method, exactness in his reasoning, with a sound judgment, will infallibly make as much progress in it as the human mind is capable of. By his *memory*, joined to *close observation*, he will amass a multitude of facts with their accompanying data; by habits of order [*method*] he will classify and connect them with a small number of principles which will enable him to draw on them with ease when required; *reason* will guide him in the straight and narrow path of truth; *imagination*, the mother of ingenuity, will launch him into unknown regions.¹⁰¹

With the relationship between teacher and student taken as basic, the second *key element* of quality in a Marianist school is the programming of a integrated *formation* for the students. That means “developing the individual’s physical, psychological, intellectual, moral, social and creative qualities” in a harmonious and gradual way, in the hope of assuring that each student acquire the skills necessary for developing his own personal life and that he might collaborate in the building up of a better world.¹⁰² In seeking an integral formation, Marianist schools aim to provide a fully human pedagogy and to raise the issues that challenge the human being in his inmost

¹⁰¹ Jean-Philippe Lalanne, “Address Delivered at the Formal Opening of the Entomological Museum in the Boarding School of the Rue des Menuts, Bordeaux,” *The Spirit of Our Foundation* 3, 522; cited in Lizarraga, *La educación marianista: antología de textos*, (Madrid: SPM, 1995), 62-63.

¹⁰² *CME*, no. 32.

depths. A fundamental condition for imparting an integral formation is the construction and implementation of a well-structured curriculum, simple and clear for all the educators. An educational institution is not effective if it appears to be only an agglomeration of individualistic teachers, however valuable they might be. It requires a process through which the community establishes what kind of meaning we teach, what we teach, how we teach and how we evaluate that teaching. The curriculum, in order to be a real and living guideline in a school, is not a simple document prepared by a small group (e.g., the administration) or outside the school, as can happen with a public ministry of education. To achieve the purpose of an integral and coherent curriculum, a sustained effort of all the teachers is required.

It is essential that it be clearly established what level of learning the students must achieve in the successive teaching cycles. These standards orient the work of the teacher and engage him with his colleagues, since the goal to be attained requires the coherent and shared efforts of all. It allows help to be given to those students who are having difficulty, encouraging the design of personalized strategies for their development.

The educational quality of a Marianist school is constituted through specific means, one of which is *teamwork*; no educational institution can survive and confront cultural and social challenges without the formation of good teams. These can be formed if there exists an authentic collaboration among its members, based on humility, sincere openness, the desire to

learn from one another and their working together in setting objectives determined by the mission. As Father Chaminade pointed out to Father Chevaux: “They must all act together. The work is common to all, and each one is jointly responsible, in a certain measure.... When you all work together, you see how certain difficulties can be overcome.”¹⁰³

But it is not enough to proclaim the importance of group work; good schools must learn to put it into practice through appropriate training programs. These programs can encourage the promotion of projects – specific, of short duration, easy evaluation and coming out of institutional needs – by teams of teachers who are actively seeking to improve the quality of their institution.

Authentic quality is not just the sum of specific projects or significant individual moments; rather, it characterizes the everyday practices, it forms part of the genetic map of an institution. To achieve it, Marianist schools need quality educators who bring an extensive professional preparation, but above all a profound interior richness, expressed in their generous gift of self and the nourishing of their vocation. They need educators who are convinced that quality is not a simple matter of marketing, but a demand of love; because we love our students, our families and our colleagues, we try to offer them the best of our lives.

¹⁰³ “Letter No. 725, to Father Chevaux, February 7, 1834.”

2. A quality institution for all

Individuals, families and communities more and more expect a quality education. We have seen the essential conditions and requirements necessary to achieve it, but, education is an activity centered upon the person, just relying on those conditions does not guarantee that all the students will attain such an education. In a school a significant number of persons work and study together who have diverse individual conditions, origins, family backgrounds, incomes, cultural baggage and different talents, in many cases openly opposed to one another. This multiplicity leads every good school to raise the question of how to assure that a quality education is within the reach of all its students.

Concrete answers vary, but can be grouped into three types. Some schools emphasize the strict completion of the standards for quality and end up becoming elite schools for a small number of students. Others, in order to be “inclusive” of all, abdicate the option for quality and end up gradually losing the meaning for their existence. Neither of these answers can be applicable to a Marianist school, because in the 21st century a good school is one that tries to match its ideal of quality with the aspirations of each one of its students through the promotion and the practice of equity.

Educational equity is sustained by two ethical imperatives: on the one hand, the recognition of the diversity of the persons involved and, on the other, the non-acceptance of historical, cultural, social and economic determinisms. Each person is

a unique being and has an inviolable dignity; for that reason he deserves to be cared for, valued, and encouraged to develop all his potentialities within a framework of respect and consideration. It is not acceptable, therefore, to treat persons all the same way, but neither can they be abandoned to their lot, pretending that individuals with absolutely different starting points can achieve the educational objectives in the same way. The equity criterion identifies the dimensions with respect to which the horizons of equality are defined.

If we believe in an integral quality education, equity means establishing the basic knowledge content that must be guaranteed to all the students, and from which each one can develop his own individual goals. In a world of increasing complexity, to include or exclude is not merely a question of guaranteeing a place in school but seeing to it that all the students have the opportunity of access to significant learning.

A good school is one that tends to equity. When we proclaim “quality education for all” we can either be content with a nice slogan or we can assume a radical stance that challenges, that moves towards the creation of new ways and surroundings, a radical stance that implies making place for the uniqueness of each student, caring for him but at the same time investing heavily in the development of his talents, his will and his efforts.

There is no quality in a Marianist school if there is no commitment to equity. Our educational tradition teaches us that

“the child needs...a customized education, at the same time that identical actions taken for all might risk impoverishing his personality. Uniformity and anonymity are temptations to taking the easy way out in education.”¹⁰⁴ Even more so, as Father Simler points out, “no student should believe that he is forgotten or despised; on the contrary, each one must be convinced that the teacher is aware of him, that he enjoys the teacher’s affection and esteem, that he is the object of a special attention and concern.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, while good training, demanding study, fluent speech and commitment to knowledge are sought, a Marianist school asks that the educator be present to the student, work at his learning, be attentive to difficulties that may arise, show flexibility for choosing different paths, and persevere with those who show less ability....

For Marianist education there is no quality without equity, no equity without providing a good education for all and neither quality nor equity without warmth, without an active and loving presence of the teachers with each one of their students.

3. An evangelizing style

Well-developed teaching permits the Society of Mary to insert itself into different cultures and to have an institutional

¹⁰⁴ Hoffer, 132, cited in Lizarraga, *La educación marianista: antología de textos*, (Madrid: SPM, 1995), 58.

¹⁰⁵ Simler, « Guide du maître dans l’enseignement primaire » (manuscript in Archives of General Administration), Société de Marie, 1875 ; cited in Lizarraga, *La educación*, 56.

framework for its apostolic action, *i.e.*, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. In Marianist schools a style of evangelization has been forged in which the profane and the sacred do not travel along parallel paths, but come together in a horizon of humanization and of fullness. Marianist educational institutions do not accept the supposed dichotomy between evangelizing objectives and educational goals, because

...it is inconceivable that the Gospel can be proclaimed unless it illuminates, infuses encouragement and hope, and inspires adequate solutions to the problems of existence; nor can a true and full promotion of human beings be conceived without opening them to God and proclaiming Jesus Christ to them.¹⁰⁶

As Father Hoffer put it so well, “A Christian does not cease to be a human being; he ought even to be more integrated than any other, in order to obey the Creator who has entrusted to him his human nature so that he might carry it to perfection.”¹⁰⁷ Evangelization “is a question ... of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life,....”¹⁰⁸ For this reason, we maintain that

¹⁰⁶ *Document of Aparecida*, 333.

¹⁰⁷ Hoffer, 137; cited in Lizarraga, *La education*, 14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, (December 8, 1975), §19. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html

*Marianist schools, therefore, not only commit themselves to effective education and mutual support, but encourage teachers and students alike to emulate Jesus in love of and service to others. Virtue is impossible without some knowledge, but unfortunately even a great deal of knowledge can exist without virtue. Marianist educators aim to combine both valuable knowledge and genuine virtue.*¹⁰⁹

This conception of the complementarity and mutual necessity of the educational and evangelizing dimensions of the mission generates a pastoral style in which faith is embodied, which illuminates life and lets itself be challenged by it, bringing about the building up of strong faith communities where work is understood not merely as “a job but as a ministry of love and service.”¹¹⁰

The believing educational community is not separated from the world, but dialogues with it from out of its faith life. The *dialogue between faith and contemporary culture* is an essential condition for an education that is integral and qualitative and for the work of humanizing society. From the very beginnings of the Marianist Family, the faith – culture dialogue has been an on-going concern: “Gospel faith, with its integration of the intellect and the heart, illuminates our knowledge of particular cultures, while science, technology, and knowledge of other religions amplify our understanding of the search for truth.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *CME*, no.16.

¹¹⁰ *CME*, no.15.

¹¹¹ *CME*, no.22.

We Marianists feel particularly challenged by this and our schools do promote the encounter between their cultural settings and the message of the Gospel. We want this encounter to produce a dialogue, leaving aside confrontation and fanaticism, so that the faith might become inculturated and the culture might be evangelized. We want our schools to take up all the signs of life and hope that contemporary cultures transmit to us, at the same time questioning whatever threatens the good life; we want them to propose ways of transformation towards a more humane and more just world. Broadening the horizon towards the transcendent, which is “impossible to confine within the limits of scientific reasoning, but nonetheless a vital experience for the human person,”¹¹² is the ultimate (and most desirable) objective of this dialogue.

In our so-called “knowledge society” it is said that education has taken on a strategic value. Personal and social development is associated with effective access to quality education throughout one’s lifetime. The previously cited McKinsey Report indicates that the “success” of an educational system is achieved when all children receive the best education, when the most gifted persons are teaching and when the capacity of the teachers is developed for providing an efficient education. Marianist education accepts all these conditions, but broadens and deepens them since, as Paolo Freire put it, “to educate is to humanize.” What we have to do in the schools is to develop the human dimensions of the students. To humanize means,

¹¹² Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 84.

first of all, that the students discover their own proper dignity, that they discover that life has meaning and is worth living, in spite of all its setbacks and pains.

If to educate is to humanize, we educators are creators. Therefore,

*Marianist educators define success distinctly—rejoicing when their students are faithful to the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, exemplify joy and courage in witnessing to that gospel, form communities of faith resonant with the vibrancy of early Christianity, and use their knowledge and competence to serve and transform society.*¹¹³

||| THE ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE OF MARIANIST SCHOOLS: BUILDING UP AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

As we have remarked, a school is not kept going merely by the sum total of individual efforts, however powerful and effective they might be. What is needed is an intelligent and profound convergence within a simple and functional organizational design. Educational work is becoming more complex and the mechanisms of administration and animation of the schools

¹¹³ *CME*, no. 17.

demand a higher level of professionalism and the development of specific competencies, but this must happen without forgetting that the key to education is in the establishing of quality pedagogical relationships, characterized by equity and warmth, among all the faculty, staff and students of a school.

The objective of a good administration is to respond to the needs of the students while providing for the well-being and growth of all the members of the community. This is not an easy task and the dynamic of educational institutions shows us that good administration means the development of four major areas:

- *Leadership*, in providing the necessary direction, coherence and meaning for the educational undertaking. Schools do not need persons who are simply bureaucratic functionaries holding a job, but leaders who give inspirational direction and invite the cooperation of the greatest possible number of the members of the institution. The kind of leadership that is necessary requires good management of information (receiving, analyzing, distributing), efficient communications, dealing with conflicts and finding ways to solve problems, and the combining of prudence with the courage to take on and promote necessary changes.
- *Orientation of the curriculum*: if a curriculum is coherent and stimulating, it becomes the backbone of an educational institution, so that one of the priorities in educational management is curricular administration. One of the ob-

jectives of the president's/principal's academic council is to assure effective learning for all students, which requires appropriate planning, intelligent designing of the school's academic program, concrete means for the application of the curricular designs in the classrooms, control and evaluation of outcomes. Indispensable elements for curricular administration are the content to be learned, the didactic strategies, the use of teaching time and tools for control and follow-up.

- *Management of the atmosphere and living together:* the atmosphere and the relationships established in a school are fundamental to motivation and commitment to the pursuit of learning. Aspects such as finding times and places for dialogue, encouraging collaboration and participation of all the stakeholders of the institution, forming support networks and identification with its educational program, fostering growth in trust and creativity for dealing with the anxieties and demands that arise within the community are all essential if we wish to animate a quality educational institution.
- *Intelligent administration of resources:* no institutional project develops in a vacuum, but is sustained by the efforts of persons and the use of material resources. For this reason, the school administration must obtain, coordinate and distribute the talent of the staff and faculty and see to the good management of the finances, the infrastructure and the operating budget. Frugality in managing what one has, creativity in obtaining additional resources, careful selec-

tion of personnel and training of teachers are conditions which favor good administration.

It is good to remember, however, that schools need more than just good strategies and professional competencies. The “management” level is important and must be filled by persons who have the best specific training, but the core of educational administration is the animation, the transmission of goals, values and stimulating objectives. To animate is to give the breath of life and the meaning of what is being done, fundamental in a time of uncertainties and constant changes. Animating means sharing life with the teachers, the students and their parents, but never from the “heights” of position or professional knowledge. Leadership is exercised from the floor, not *ex cathedra*, from shared experience, not from theoretical schemes. School administration requires the fulfillment of legal requirements and demonstration of professional skills, but above all it means identifying with what is going on in the mind, the heart and the spirit of each one of the actors involved in educating or being educated.

At the present time we must take into account three plans for action and animation, different in their dynamics and needs, but complementary and necessary one to the other:

- The first is the *DAILY SCHEDULE*, according to which the everyday work is developed. It allows us to manage the day-to-day activities, the micro-dimension, and its relationship to the whole enterprise. The schedule must have

healthy routines that facilitate work and don't overwhelm. It calls for a healthy direction that is present and guiding, stimulating the sense of responsibility of each actor.

- The second plane is the *STRUCTURAL*, concerned with basic organizational management. It covers the areas of the school that need to be developed, the points for possible improvements, the necessary adaptations to the specific situation of the school, management of change as a permanent factor and the cultural tendencies which are influencing the field of education. The structural plane needs personnel with a strong capacity for analysis, exercise of foresight and clarity for making the correct decisions.
- The third plane is the *SPIRITUAL*, where we find the heart of the institution. The spiritual, if well developed, allows a job to be transformed into a labor of love and that labor into a mission. It supposes a personal journey toward a more profound interior life. It involves knowing how to manage and understand the times, personal situations and strategies for appropriate motivation.

The management style that emerges from Marianist pedagogy gives clear guidelines for the ways to animate a school, combining the three organizational planes. Father Chaminade insisted upon the need for unity and communion of efforts for the sake of the mission, for which the cultivation of fraternal relationships among the members of a work is fundamental. A large part of the Marianist identity of a school manifests itself in the relationships among its members:

In the Marianist pedagogical tradition, all members of the educational community, boards of directors, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students communicate respectfully, recognizing others as individuals within the same community. We strive to create a gracious environment we listen attentively and engage in dialogue with trust and empathy. By being available and open to others, we continue to make the gospel vibrant in the daily life of our schools.¹¹⁴

For a Marianist school, the building up of good interpersonal relationships is more than just a functional or organizational factor, but an ethical demand; we don't cultivate what we do not cherish, and we do not cherish what we do not know, respect and love.

The administrative style of a Marianist school tries to encourage the development of an authentic *educational community*. Education can be one of those places where one is shown, taught and learns to live in another way, more humanly, more closely and more fraternally. One of the reasons and most profound justifications for a Catholic school in the 21st century lies in its building up of an authentic community, where every undertaking, every activity, every dynamic and structure encourage the humanization of the bonds among all its members. In a Catholic school every person involved feels known by name, recognized, and shares a place and space of his own. Raising this prospect in societies characterized by fear, isolation and

¹¹⁴ *CME*, no. 45.

preference for anonymity and marginalization, becomes a call, an imperative and an opportunity for our schools.

This objective requires a delicate work of building up and synthesizing, which is easy to say but very complicated to actually realize. In effect, to be a more human and more fraternal place implies changing some paradigms and behaviors that “guaranteed” a certain recognition and identity. Today each school must reorganize its pedagogical, professional and affective relationships so as to reconcile individual autonomy – so jealously guarded – with the common good. This latter can be diluted if we do not develop procedures for cooperation among students, parents, teachers and administrators. This requires a renewed network of relationships, wherein personal rights are reconciled with social responsibilities and where vocational commitments can be displayed openly in a fragile and unstable context.

Forming community means going beyond the technical workings. A person’s community spirit is based in the affections, in subjective feelings and in a commonality of criteria, aspects that are increasingly relevant for today’s men and women. Tenti has said it well: “In our contemporary societies the affective (or communitarian) component is increasingly present, even in societies juridically designated as ‘anonymous.’” [Tr. Note: *Sociedad anonima* is the technical Spanish word for a corporation.]¹¹⁵ Our current environment is conducive to

¹¹⁵ Emilio Tenti Fanfani, “Notas sobre escuela y comunidad,” Buenos Aires, IIPE-Buenos Aires, May 20, 2004, 2.

enhancing the communitarian dimension of our educational institutions, relying upon and encouraging the multiplicity of contributions, nuances and viewpoints. The center of the relationship dynamics should be located in the affective more than in the organizational, in personal commitments more than in rules and regulations.

The idea of building up an educational community forms part of the Marianist heart. The community spirit inspired by the charism tries to manifest itself in every Marianist school. In the words of Ignacio Otaño, “An educational community is a school alive with a spirit of collaboration, teamwork, etc., elements essential in our world,”¹¹⁶ where one learns and practices participation, complementarity, representation skills [?], and accountability: “The Marianist educational [community] tradition has long been characterized by shared responsibility for decision making at all appropriate levels. Effective collaboration requires good communication, clear lines of authority, and respect for the principle of subsidiarity.”¹¹⁷ The Marianist educational tradition seeks a community of “union without confusion,” where plurality and diversity are seen as richness, not as obstacles; where each one has something to contribute, to learn and to teach, whatever be his position, his previous formation or his talents, where one’s identification is not his location on an organizational flowchart, but his feeling that he is part of a family and a mission. Consequently, all the per-

¹¹⁶ *Enseñar para educar*, 50.

¹¹⁷ *CME*, no. 46.

sons involved together in a Marianist school are called to take part in the building up of the community: students, teachers, auxiliary personnel, administrators, parents, religious. This call extends beyond the end of one's school days; the alumni, former teachers and parents of the alumni are all considered to be part of a Marianist educational community.

The transformation of the educational institution into a community is the outcome of placing interpersonal relationships at the center of the administration, because “if we live a community spirit, the type of relationships among the various stakeholders changes very positively. Relations with the parents are smoother, teachers and students are not enemies, even if some “incidents” are inevitable.¹¹⁸ To achieve this climate, Marianist schools need to develop two fundamental elements:

1. Open, profound and fraternal *dialogue*: “Because we educate by ‘our every word, gesture, and look’ we listen attentively and engage in dialogue with trust and empathy.”¹¹⁹ This quotation from the document on *Characteristics of Marianist Education* reminds us of an expression in the first *Constitutions of the Society of Mary (1839)*, an indication of how Father Chaminade understood communication and the importance he gave to it. For Marianist schools, establishing contact of greater quality, contact that is more open and multidirectional within the educational

¹¹⁸ Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*. 52.

¹¹⁹ *CME*, no. 45.

community, can generate among its members a flow of empathy that is electric.

The work of education is essentially a succession of communications through which a style and a culture are built up. Ernesto Gore holds that organizations are semantic environments, which redefine what is said and what is done and where there is an established “listening background,” the history and culture of the organization, “which assures that messages are understood in one way and not in another.”¹²⁰ A semantic environment, such as a school, requires, besides the use of appropriate tools, the creation of communication that facilitates dialogue, exchange and the quest for agreements, over and above regulations, the one-way flow of directives and impositions from on high.

We Marianists understand that the first element in communication within an institution is presence, a presence that is close and simple, a real companionship. Presence is the primary condition of dialogue, combining the right words, questions that make one think and silences that know how to wait. Dialogue seeks to build up, by means of words and gestures of approval as well as with appropriate and discrete corrections, communication which causes everyone to grow, communication which serves to achieve the full humanization and realization of persons.

¹²⁰ Ernesto Gore, “El director de escuela como gestor del cambio,” *Campus de la Universidad de San Andrés*, Victoria (provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina), September 28, 2005.

2. *Trust* among its members: there is no individual growth nor institutional “effectiveness” without an appropriate exchange among the diverse members of a community. When the interaction of expectations and outcomes increases the sense of security of the members of an institution, the result is trust, the perception of sincerity and familiarity that allows us to feel comfortable within a group. Education is not possible without trust, but this is not generated spontaneously; much of it arises from the action (or inaction) of the administrators of the institution. Their role is key in arousing and broadening trust: listening, attending to and respecting each member of the educational community, in order to integrate and articulate their contributions in bringing about the improvement of the school. For such work both personal integrity and professional competence are needed.

This trust has four requirements:

- It starts with respect among the members, which can guarantee continual and deepening interaction.
- It overcomes mere transactional reciprocity (“I give you – you give me”), demonstrating consideration for, commitment to, and genuine interest in the other.
- It is based on solid professional competencies that can fulfill assigned responsibilities.
- It demonstrates coherence between what is said and what is done.

When the daily administration of an educational institution generates trust, the results are visible. The natural vulnerability that each individual feels in a group is reduced; the members learn from one another; their sense of moral responsibility for their neighbor's growth increases; a shared sense of the mission is generated. These outcomes result in improved learning by the students.

Dialogue and trust nourish the dynamic of *collaboration*, a distinctive trait of administration in a Marianist school. The collaboration between lay persons and religious, and between men and women, is not a mere coincidence in the history of the Marianist educational institutions. Founded upon and supported by the roots of Marianist spirituality and by a vision of the Church as the People of God, the internal collaboration has a clear objective: to maintain and enhance, in a sustainable way, an educational idea.

The objective of the collaboration is to enrich an educational style based upon the spirituality that came from Father Chaminate's intuitions, which was forged through simple and personalized signs and customs, and which is animated by a holistic view of the person.

No peer collaboration is possible without each person's profound conviction of their intimate unity. An educator who strives to grow in each of the aspects of his personality, who seeks to combine and orient them through a clear meaning of his life, is better prepared to be a unifying and collabora-

tive factor among his colleagues. He understands better the richness in a diversity of talents; he respects the dignity of all, of whatever sex or condition. For that reason, promoting the holistic growth of the educators is the best investment for the development of collaboration in our schools and for sustaining Marianist pedagogy.

Collaboration is important not only for the relational style it generates among the teachers, but also for its pedagogical effect upon the students. Every Marianist school must provide a setting for integration, where each and every one feels valued, respected and stimulated to grow. When this spirit of collaboration increases, integration, mutual respect and community spirit grow also. Collaboration is converted into a mirror in which are reflected the desires for solidarity and brotherhood typical of children and youth. In the lively and heartfelt cooperation of their teachers, our students learn to build up a world of deeper, more fraternal relationships.

Father Chaminade fostered a style by which all the members of the Marianist Family have relationships of friendship, mutual trust and collaboration. This style is known in our surroundings as *family spirit* and has become one of the most notable and recognizable characteristics of Marianist schools. Although it might be a bit difficult to articulate, this family spirit generates an ambiance where each person – especially the students – feel “at home,” recognized, valued and protected. “It is necessary that the students find in the school a good and wise family life,” taught Father Lalanne, because “if the school ceases

to be the extension of the domestic family, it will just by the force of things take on the likeness of a barracks or a prison. We could not then speak of disciples properly so called, but of trained children, in the less noble sense of the word,” as Father Simler pointed out.

This family manner of understanding a school is one way of making concrete in our lives and our actions the qualities of Mary: her loving kindness, goodness, a healthy sense of leniency, hospitality, maternal care, qualities based in faith of the heart and which become a clear benchmark for the animation of an educational community.

An effective administration is an indispensable condition for any organization. Without losing sight of their transcendent goals, our schools must have a flexible and efficient system of administration. The goals are set high, the resources not unlimited, the quantity of persons involved is very large: these elements oblige us to have a participatory form of animation and direction.

It is evident that, as is already occurring in other segments of our schools, not all administrative responsibility for the works can be in the hands of the religious. This circumstance has been seen, on occasion, as a significant loss by the brothers and sisters. As Bernard Vial put it: “For some religious this situation [having to delegate responsibilities to lay persons] seemed to paralyze them, faced as they were with institutions

that had become too cumbersome....”¹²¹ In some cases it was proposed and/or decided to abandon a school because the religious were unable to maintain an administrative presence. If this approach were to be followed, we would have fewer and fewer Marianist schools. Can there be another possible alternative? It is at this point that collaboration between lay persons and religious is crucial and decisive. The most theoretical approaches become fact (or do not) in a management shared among men, women, religious and lay, coming out of a common spirituality and mission, suitability for the role and commitment to the task.

These essential conditions for good animation in Marianist schools (spirituality, suitability and commitment) tell us that neither specialists in leadership without commitment and without Marianist roots nor lay persons or religious well known for their spirituality but without qualifications for administration can suffice. Loading the burden in some way on others carries a latent risk and a serious danger to the future of our schools.

Our model of administration requires certain conditions to foster the effectiveness and the fulfillment of its objectives:

- That each Marianist school design a simple and efficient management flow-chart, wherein the roles, the lines of

¹²¹ Bernard Vial, “Education.” Translated by Joseph Roy, in Albano, Ambrogio (ed.), *Commentary on the Rule of Life of the Society of Mary*. (Dayton; NACMS, 1994), 384.

communication, the competencies and areas of responsibility of each person in the institution are well established. One fundamental element is that in said flow-charts the desired profiles for Marianist administrators be laid out clearly: the ability to animate the works, bringing a global vision, an ability to share responsibility, to develop dialogue and trust among peers, discretion, availability and a spirit of collaboration.

- That each school form true administrative teams. It becomes more evident every day that organizations cannot depend upon charismatic leaders (even if they have some) but must be maintained by solid management teams. Forming these teams is not a simple task: it takes time, training, delegation of small responsibilities – by way of testing – and mentoring. To achieve good educational administration, we rely on programs for training management teams; surely we will need to increase the number of programs and broaden their scope.
- That each school maintain a close collaboration between the religious community -- if there is one present – and the administration of the institution. The religious community plays a very important role in a school: they are the tradition and the continuity (“the man who never dies”); they can animate the lives of the teachers; they can offer opportune guidelines. Marianist schools need their prayer, their acceptance, their openness to sharing, their closeness and support, their hospitality. We need the religious to offer the support that is so necessary in animating the

lives of the men and women who make up our educational communities.

IV | INSTITUTIONS THAT VALUE AND DRIVE CHANGE

One typical feature of Marianist education is its vision of time and historical circumstances. Although it arose in a time in which anticlericalism was rampant, the goal of “re-christianizing France” launched by Father Chaminade in his designing a pastoral strategy did not fit into traditional conservative frameworks, but started from a nuanced reading of the signs of the times in order to become embodied in the society of the era.

On the educational plane, that viewpoint combined attention to social changes and to the needs of individual persons, respect for the advances in science and knowledge and a sense of looking to the future, all derived from one of the most salient features of Marianist pedagogy. This was already clearly expressed in the first *Constitutions of the Society of Mary* (1839):

The principles of education, well grasped, do not vary, but the procedures whereby those principles are applied and the methods of teaching must necessarily follow the progress of human society and be adapted to its need and to its wishes. To admit invariability in the form and matter of instruction would limit to a very short time the

*service and even the existence of an Institute devoted to education.*¹²²

This definition clearly reflects Chaminade's understanding of evolution in education,¹²³ which was confirmed and handed down to us by outstanding religious educators. So Father Lalanne favored a healthy balance between innovation and experience, using the advances in the knowledge base: "As enemies both of imprudent innovations and of blind routine, let us make use of the new knowledge acquired by modern researchers, but without abandoning the principles consecrated by experience." While Father Kieffer emphasized that "not all that is new is to be condemned; if it were, it would close the path of progress. We have to maintain an open mind, welcoming all forms of true progress. But at the same time we need to avoid all undue rush to novelty just for the sake of novelty."

This positive inclination towards change finds its roots in a gospel passage specifically indicated by the Founder: Jesus' advice to "pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Mt 9:17 *NIV*). Our educational tradition pushes our institutions towards a sound adaptation to change, with a mind open to the assimilation of social and cultural advances, with a critical eye for distinguishing what makes man more human from that which diminishes the human being. Our tradition

¹²² Art. 267.

¹²³ In the light of this statement of 1839, we can understand the "perfectionist" desire to design a *Method of Teaching* specifically for the teaching religious, as we have seen in the previous pages.

uses the power of observation to anticipate and discover possible alternatives for doing a better job of educating. During his lifetime, Father Chaminade “received the grace of the new wine and succeeded in finding new wineskins.”¹²⁴ From the very heart of the charism, Marianist schools are not and cannot be conservative (even less, reactionary) and a good part of their successes and accomplishments come from this openness and spirit, because the new without spirit ends up being diluted and the spirit that is not renewed withers away beyond recuperation.

The world in which we live, and – above all – the world which is gestating, presents us a challenging scenario: how are we to think about what is coming? How do we dialogue, from what we are learning and what we already know, with the new? How can we do it without ceasing to question that knowledge that we are acquiring? How do we revise our habitual responses before the new questions that are arising? It is only possible to address these questions with a mind and a heart disposed to see, to feel, to appreciate, and to commit oneself to the man and the woman, the child and the youth of our time.

The key to this paradigm is the degree of flexibility and pliability that a Marianist school demonstrates, presuming that it not fall into following ephemeral fashions, into pragmatism or relativism. Although Marianist schools have had a healthy

¹²⁴ Arnáiz, “*Beato Chaminade: misionero en un mundo nuevo*,” in *Vida Nueva*, Madrid, n° 2748, April 2011.

inclination to drive change, these processes were not always simple or automatic. We must pay the price-- to unlearn, to step out of the comfortable and to open ourselves up to new formats and realities.¹²⁵ Given an appropriate dose of creativity and adaptation to concrete reality, the needed innovative strategies require a combination of the following factors:

- On-going formation of personnel
- Meaningful participation of the administrative teams in the formation
- Participation of teachers in decisions which affect the Educational Program of the institution
- Learning from one another
- Real application of the Educational Program and the Curriculum in the classes
- Development of adequate learning materials
- Constant evaluation of the Curriculum program.

Unlike the Founder's time, when changes occurred because of specific events, in the 21st century change is a permanently on-going factor. Most scholars argue that we are not in a time

¹²⁵ For example, the original responsibility to attend to elementary and middle school education notoriously retarded our openness to the world of pre-school and kindergarten education. Likewise, the experience acquired in formats like high school or normal school hindered us, in many countries, from developing a Marianist program for technical education.

of marked by the casual accumulation of changes, but that we are living through a change of epoch and of paradigms: “In today’s society, a Copernican revolution is taking place in the different dimensions of our life and so, at this moment, is being born a new paradigm that encompasses and empowers everything that is new.”¹²⁶ Our epoch experiences *change* and *acceleration* as predominant features of the culture, which add a large dose of uncertainty to the work of education. The socio-cultural context itself moves at a much higher speed of transformation than does a scholastic organization, and the educators must pay more attention than ever to deciphering and analyzing the signals given off by society. The Marianist schools must understand change as a constant; just when they have achieved one goal, they will have to confront new challenges, and they will have to figure upon ever shorter times for resolution and action. This does not mean having to act by reflex, but adjusting one’s reflection to the social rhythm: act reflectively and reflect while acting, avoiding any dissociation between the two spheres.

This scenario supposes that “adaptation to change” cannot be circumscribed in precise moments or by individual projects but must be maintained in systematic paradigms with strategies for innovation. It is necessary that changes be accepted as challenges, to see them as *valid and necessary challenges for every educational institution*; for its organization, its style of community, its pedagogical mission, its climate of personal re-

¹²⁶ Arnáiz, *Lo nuevo hoy es posible*, (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones SM, 2009), 49.

lationships and its pastoral ministry. Considering the changes as challenges helps the schools to evolve, to make adaptations critically, and to alter their routines and structures in creative ways. It also means opening new paths, renewing hope, seeing opportunities, constructing a broad vision of the future that we desire. In short, it means broadening and enriching our vision with new perspectives and better reflections.

To move ahead in the 21st century, we must deepen our educational tradition, attentive to both present and future needs. We must manage a present that has a future. Along that path, there are – among others – four major challenges to our schools:

- **The cultural challenge:** becoming a place of true convergence between what is considered relevant for today’s society and that which the new generations are experiencing and feeling. In recent decades, in many countries, the youth culture and the school culture have grown further and further apart. In some cases, this distance is such that for the youth “school praxis is frequently actually a fictional world, a penance more or less prolonged and ended only when they can finally get back to their own truly authentic reality.”¹²⁷ If we still want to be instruments of humanization and of an integrated formation, our schools must be places where the knowledge, the needs, and – above all

¹²⁷ Raffaele Simone, *La tercera fase: formas de saber que estamos perdiendo* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), 156. Translated by Susana Gómez López from *La Terza Fase: Forme di sapere che stiamo perdendo* in *Saggiari Laterza* 118 (Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 2000].

– the expectations of the students are taken into account; where there is a place for leadership among the students through practices and places that promote communication, expression and participation in the building up of an authentic educational community.

The proclamation of these principles seems clear and simple, but putting them into practice in the dynamic of an institution as complex as a school is very difficult. The only way of bringing together the two cultures, that of the school and that of the new generations, is to change the paradigm of the school with respect to the students.

That change means going from the “benevolent paternalism” of traditional education, where one tried to offer what was best for the students without having them really participate (because “they aren’t prepared,” “they haven’t the tools,” “it’s not fitting”) to another paradigm where the children and adolescents are considered as *subjects with rights* and, therefore, necessary agents in their learning process.

Recognizing the students as subjects with rights implies making institutional efforts to understand the worlds, the expectations, the problems and the fears of minors. In order to discern, judge and guide, we educators and our schools must know and understand what goes on in the minds and hearts of our students. The schools can no longer act as if these young people were empty boxes to be filled with knowledge that they will retain until the

time they come of age. The challenge to the schools is to go out to meet them, to know how to listen to them and to offer them motivational alternatives, not only in words but also from the meaningful coherence demonstrated in mature adult life.

We have indicated that education is relationship and that it is built up through the bonds between the persons who teach and those who learn in a given environment. There is no education possible if we do not make a constant effort to renew our bonds with the children, the adolescents and the youth. This renewal of bonds requires our being close to the student, giving him opportunities, time and space for expressing himself, and listening to him. An essential process would be getting close to them, walking with them, listening to what bothers them, dealing with their problems and knowing how to accept their new ideas, “seeking access to the living flesh, to the most intimate elements of the integrity of the child.”¹²⁸ In Marianist schools, the technical, political, legal and labor issues must not make us forget to look after, to accompany, to be a source of warmth and love for each student, the basic elements for being able to educate.

Today accompaniment, personal support, is decisive for being able to educate because it gives “those who are growing up the assurance that they are loved, understood

¹²⁸ Steiner, *Lessons*, 26.

and listened to,”¹²⁹ in a time dominated by abandonment of children, a time that considers people only *en masse*. The person who feels recognized, listened to, valued and loved is able to find a sense of belonging and feeling, even in the midst of disconnectedness and lack of communication. From that point it is possible to create the conditions necessary for the reception and promoting of appropriation (not merely transmission) of information, for dealing with the elements that fragment the person and for developing messages that make sense.

The change of paradigm will modify the traditional dynamic of the school, where all the activities go in one direction, from the teachers to the students. Beginning with this new view of things, the schools are called to promote multiple lines and mechanisms for the growing interaction between adults and the young. This means incorporating dynamics and times for educating in participation, as indispensable learning for civic responsibility and for avoiding anarchical and demagogic spontaneity which does not educate but distracts and manipulates consciences. This implies a setting for authority that differs from the traditional, no longer in what is assigned/given, but as an adult construct coming out of honesty, knowledge, sensitivity and meaningfulness of life. Social

¹²⁹ Benedict XVI, “Address to the Participants in the Convention of the Diocese of Rome,” Basilica of Saint John Lateran, June 11, 2007. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070611_convegno-roma_en.html

entities (and the children and adolescents as part of them) no longer accept authority based merely on a position, but based on that which they respect for the conduct of the person.

- The **didactic challenge**: re-defining and giving new meaning to learning and teaching. One of the requisites for bringing together the school culture and that of the children and adolescents is the transformation of expositive didactic practices, the effectiveness of which (in terms of learning) has diminished dramatically. What could be achieved previously by imposition, today requires a kind of persuasion and influence. Perhaps we educators and the schools need to investigate, analyze, construct and apply a pedagogy of persuasion for the formation of students today.

The enormous transformations that we are experiencing demand a redefinition of the traditional “didactic triangle,” whose points are the student, the teacher and the content that is studied. The experts speak of new trainees and new teachers in the context of knowledge societies. Our students learn signs and icons before they do letters, they have multiphasic attention, they learn by trial and error and access information mainly through digital display systems. These characteristics show the primacy of images over texts, multidirectional connections over logical linear sequence, and the breadth of alternatives over uniform mechanisms. These characteristics, which form part of the culture of the new generations, must necessarily have profound implications for the way in which we teach, for our didactic approach.

Just as at the origins of the Marianist pedagogy, Father Chaminade and the first religious put special emphasis on the elaboration of a Method of teaching, so today an adequate adaptation to the times requires a constant didactic reflection in our schools. If the plurality and heterogeneity which characterize our classrooms would make the development of a single didactic method inadequate, that does not mean that we must abandon our efforts for on-going revision and updating of our pedagogical offerings. There are social and cultural demands that impel us to revise the traditional forms of teaching. For example, the horizon of “lifelong learning” takes for granted the acquisition of skills that go far beyond a single content, subject or course. If we assume that there is a culture to be discovered and valued among our students, we have to modify the idea of the teacher as the only one who “knows” within a school. If we conclude that the school has ceased to be the sole agency for the transmission of knowledge and that there are also other agencies that, in some cases, are better informed and have greater influence upon the students, then the schools have to structure their programs to take account of and to profit from those agencies.

In addition to the new types of students and teachers, the new cultural and social scenarios are changing the type of knowledge that schools now need to offer. In the traditional school the knowledge base which was offered was the body of learning that helped one to understand the world. Today, that body is so vast and changes with

such rapidity that it would be foolish to pretend to find it in any one specific place or time. In consequence, the academic and encyclopedic vision of knowledge must yield to a conception wherein knowledge grows, is broadened, deepened and enriched through its application and the constant reflection on that “doing.” The competency-based approach may be an exciting way to explore giving new meaning to the knowledge we intend to offer in our educational institutions.

- The **political challenge**: contributing to a quality education for everyone. Marianist education is a treasure to be shared, not a privilege to be restricted. Father Chaminade’s vision did not intend education as a tool for the elites, but from the very beginning the Marianist schools were founded on the premise of being open to all, of whatever social condition, cultural baggage or economic resources: “to bring to some three-fourths of the population the principles of the faith along with human understanding.”¹³⁰ Based on this tradition: “We welcome students from various ethnic and economic backgrounds and educate students with differing abilities and gifts.”¹³¹

We do not do this as charity, but as a part of our responsibility in the building up of better, more just, more fraternal human communities. Marianist schools do not shy away from their political status, but maintain their

¹³⁰ *Constitutions* [of 1839], art. 361, cited in Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 19.

¹³¹ *CME*, no. 37.

interaction and relationship with the public authorities according to certain principles, so that their mission might be better understood and exploited. Some of those principles are:

- Feeling a part of the educational system, supervised by the corresponding civic authorities, since from the beginning “it was never intended that the educational institutions remain isolated, but that they might have an influence in society.”¹³²
- Maintaining the relationship with the State within a framework of mutual autonomy, collaboration and responsibility.
- Following with a critical and creative reflection the evolution of educational policies, prioritizing respect and personal dignity, integrated formation and equality of opportunities.
- Defending the principles of a healthy secularism, freedom of education and subsidiarity as elements necessary for developing quality education.

At times when the distance between social classes seems to be increasing, being open to all sectors of society requires that our institutions intensify their commitment to equality, both in the processes for access to our schools and in their intention that all Marianist students learn

¹³² Otaño, *Enseñar para educar*, 23.

as much as possible. A simple administrative style with little paperwork, together with a pedagogical and pastoral vision centered on community and the horizontal nature of the bonding among its members, has made the formal conditions for access to our schools relatively simple. But the social atmosphere of fragmentation and of growing distance between the diverse sectors of society works against the kind of positive environment for all classes that enriches an educational community. Favoring realistic alternatives for entry into the traditional schools and expanding the presence of Marianist education in different environments, being attentive to the diverse populations who seek access to educational services – perhaps for the first time in history – are two faces of the same coin when it comes to promoting equity in access to formal and non-formal education.

But equity also comes into play with the students who are already in our schools. So that each one of them might obtain a good education, the treatment of our children and adolescents must become ever more personalized, beginning with the recognition of their personal differences and their stories. For that end, we need to stop *taking for granted the heterogeneity of our school populations and start managing it with ease and effectiveness*. For example, we need to be accepting and collaborating with different home environments because, if the traditional school presupposed the existence of one type of family from which the children and adolescents came prepared to

adapt to a standard pedagogical program, today's schools need to establish alliances and work shoulder to shoulder with many types of families with varying formative backgrounds. This will require deepening the community's capacity for acceptance and personalization.

The idea of equality must guide us in forming a "we" without a rigid uniformity. It means moving forward in various and complementary language usages in order to know, name and understand each other and the differences among individuals; it means advancing in a critical analysis of stereotypes, to reveal false notions and prejudices and thus broaden personal viewpoints. It means making progress in collaborative exercises for studying, producing, learning and applying, becoming more comfortable in expressly outwardly ideas and feelings whereby each student (and also each educator) can "reveal himself" without fear and can learn from the richness of his companions.

Our schools need educators committed and prepared to take up and integrate the fact of pluralism and to achieve "an equivalent but heterogeneous offering,"¹³³ with multiple dimensions but of like quality and in pursuit of the same objectives. This situation requires a properly prepared faculty continuing on a consistent path of profes-

¹³³ Inés Aguerrondo, *Ministerios de Educación: De la estructura jerárquica a la organización en red*. (Buenos Aires: IIPE/UNESCO-Buenos Aires, 2002). [Trans. Note: I was unable to find this phrase in the original Spanish version posted at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001294/129499s.pdf>]

sional development, having a mastery of the material they teach and the capacity to teach students who come from different backgrounds.

The commitment to equality is not merely a question of justice for our students and their families, but also an ever more necessary contribution to the building up of authentically democratic societies. If the school is to transform sectarian and individualistic behaviors into the personal and social commitment it proposes for the building up of the common good, it is evident that we need to offer opportunities where the students can learn to deliberate, to listen, to express their opinions, to make decisions and to exercise their responsibility. It is our purpose that they interiorize the idea that the destiny of a person, of a group and of a society is not predetermined, but that it comes out of the action – and also from the omission – of the citizens. Without advancing in these exercises and styles that assume and incorporate the pluralist context in which we live, as well as differences and participation, the search for greater equality will remain limited to good proposals with uncertain results.

- The *pastoral challenge*: announcing Jesus Christ in a clear, profound and understandable manner to today’s men and women. Father Chaminade strove to motivate the apostolic action of his disciples by referring to the “new warfare” to be waged for the sake of the Gospel. Leaving aside the military connotations, we are called to carry out “a missionary ministry, situated in a pluralistic, secularized world,

[and whose] fulcrum is faith as a personal commitment that is lived in community.”¹³⁴ Each of these characteristics needed for evangelization today – missionary spirit, faith of the heart, community – form a part of the deepest wellsprings of Marianist spirituality. So our tradition, far from locking us into nostalgic conservatism, encourages the search for new strategies and new pastoral languages.

The pastoral disposition which we must deepen in our educational institutions is one that accepts, integrates, witnesses to and offers simple paths for spiritual growth. Our schools continue to be called to provide “a spectacle of a people of saints,” of men and women who feel themselves part of the building up of the Kingdom of God. In order to respond to this call, each Marianist educational community will need to review its ways of thinking, its activities, its relationships and its celebrations so as to bring them together with a sense of meaning, joy, fraternity and service.

To follow the path of the new has its costs and its risks. It means unlearning many things and being enchanted anew with the deepest sources of the educational enterprise. It requires taking on the pioneering spirit. But like all pioneering effort, it can lead us to new frontiers where we will be able to accomplish more and better education.

¹³⁴ Jesús Triguero, *La pastoral educativa en la escuela*, paper presented at the XXII Congreso de la CIEC, Santo Domingo, January 2010.

We have already said that for the Marianists the changes are legitimate calls to action. So we believe that we are in a privileged time for educating, that we stand before an exceptionally privileged opportunity, in many ways similar to those of our Founder's time.

In a multi-dimensional scenario, in order to preserve the meaning of a Marianist school we cannot isolate ourselves from the world to "protect ourselves" from the evil that lurks outside our classrooms, but we must review our identity, look deeply into our own treasures – some of them hidden or forgotten --, trust in our own strength (a substantial number of our teachers are very valuable, let's not waste them!) and *become re-enchanted*, falling in love again with the beautiful and delicate mission of educating, so as to offer a good education to the new generations.

With humility, our schools must have their windows open to the grace and the call of the Lord, who summons us to a mission as simple as it is grand: to announce the Love of God to each man and to each woman, throughout all generations. In his Providence, in the charism which Father Chaminade left us, in the educational tradition which was forged through two centuries and in the commitment of thousands of Marianist educators throughout the world lies our hope.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the principal indicators of the *quality* of a school? Do you agree that the characteristics noted in this chapter are necessary to guarantee that quality? To what degree do you think your institution fulfills them?
2. And what about the *key factors* that make a Marianist school a “good school” (pedagogical relationships between teacher and student, an integral formational program, teamwork, quality teachers,...)?
3. Does your institution know how to adequately combine *quality* with *equity*?
4. Do you believe we are right to tie together *evangelization* with *secular* education? Do we foster a genuine dialogue between faith and culture? Do you believe that we achieve in our school *educational success* as it is defined in paragraph 17 of the document on *Characteristics of Marianist Education*?
5. In our center, are the four major areas given sufficient attention and development that permit good administration (leadership, curriculum guidelines, fostering of the ambience and living together, management of resources)?
6. Do we know how to build up an authentic *educational community* in our institution? How are the interpersonal relationships (pedagogical, professional, affective) within it? Is there dialogue and trust? Can you sense a true *family spirit*?

7. What role does the religious community play in the school?
8. Is our school open to the *changes* that new times demand? Do we see them as opportunities for advancement? What is my personal attitude towards them?
9. How are we confronting the *great challenges* facing educational institutions: cultural, didactic, political, pastoral?
10. Are we disposed to an on-going re-enchantment with our mission of educating? What are we lacking that might help us?

EPILOGUE

Throughout these pages we have described and analyzed the assemblage of principles that animate Marianist education. We have done so, not as an academic effort or a theoretical exercise, but underlining their role as reference points giving specific guidance for Marianist educators. Our educational principles help to illuminate the meaning of what we do every day, year after year, in all kinds of educational works, in pursuit of a quality integral formation for children, adolescents, youth and adults. Those principles allow us to confront utilitarian pragmatism, because they inspire us and offer us keys for putting our pedagogy into action. They guide us in designing a future with hope, starting out from a present that is actually meaningful.

The principles of Marianist education have their roots in the spiritual experience of the Founder and in his attitude towards reality, as was shown in the first book of this series of publications. Chaminade was a man of action, but never an activist; he knew how to combine the cultivation of interiority, formation

and discernment with mission. Beginning with the charism which inspired him and which he transmitted to us, a particular pedagogical style has been formed that has known how to:

- Adapt general principles to the needs of specific persons
- Conceive of the future as a horizon open to the positive action of human beings and to the redemptive grace of God
- Maintain an awareness of social progress and search for new ways to integrate evangelization and education
- Exercise discernment among the good that must be taken up, the valuable that we must conserve and the negative that we need to avoid.

Our anthropological vision, our program for living the faith, our understanding of society and our institutional viewpoint are embodied principles, in dialogue with the reality surrounding us and open to the creativity of all the participants in the educational scene. Marianist education has developed broadly, but can only be sustained into the future if we persevere in an on-going exercise of discernment. To discern means to be open to the signs of the times, to the new which reality forces upon us, to the management of change. Our Marianist vocation calls us to weigh events properly, so as to avoid both an abrupt rupture with the past and the ingenuous notion that all remains unchangeable. In this process, our educational principles cannot be anchors that hold us to specific models, but rather are lighthouses that guide and stimulate us for our educational and evangelizing mission.

In this pluralistic and uncertain 21st century, marked by globalization and fragmentation, these principles can help us in our work of achieving a good life for all by helping them to think about what and how to contribute, what and how to share, what and how to accept, what and how to transform. This exercise is not limited to the explanation of concepts or to the designing of an organizational flowchart, because in that way the educational principles would be reduced to nice simple phrases, alienated from the concrete problems of daily life. Discernment and embodiment require that our educational works be understood and animated from a systems perspective. This allows us to discover how the principles stimulate the members of a community and how the interrelationships among them operate to achieve a common purpose, because the effectiveness of the educational principles depends upon the choices made by individuals, consciously or unconsciously, over time. Thus, as the specialists in systems thinking put it, the principles are transformed into mental models, into a set of beliefs, into ways of understanding, into images of what is desired and into the expectations of an educational work. When these mental models impregnate positively the life of a community, that community deploys all its potential and sees happen in concrete reality what is expressed in those educational principles that sustain, motivate and guide it.

Marianist education has to be a personal and social transforming factor, or else it has neither meaning nor identity. It must be a serious education, open to the advances of the human sciences and pedagogy, that encourages the formation of com-

petent persons, capable of using their talents and potential in favor of the common good. We seek to adapt ourselves to the times and to be of value to our society without mimicking its logic, but rather maintaining an on-going connection with the needs, expectations and specific conditions of each context wherein we are active. This we shall address in the next book in this series. In short, we want to do formation well with the tools we have now, taking into account the concrete needs of today's children, adolescents and families in order to improve their living situation, in order to make it more dignified, more human and more Christian.

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The Marianist religious have been creating educational works since our beginnings nearly two centuries ago. Today, we continue to dedicate the best of our human and material resources to education across the globe. The changing circumstances of our world and the growing presence of Marianist works in new cultures pose questions regarding how to respond creatively to new situations and how to transmit our educational knowledge and heritage to the new educators who join in our works.

Connected to our history and with a foothold in the present, we will be able to face the future with confidence if we can act with fidelity and creativity. Heir of the past, full of life today and open to the future, Marianist education continues to represent, as it has since its beginnings, a **heritage** and a project of the **future**.

The collection *Marianist Education: Heritage and Future* was born out of these convictions. It is intended as a tool for formation and reflection for all people and groups involved in Marianist education, as well as a source of inspiration for local educational projects. The collection comprises a number of titles that aim to take an in-depth look at and expand upon the contents of other existing documents on the characteristics of Marianist education.

0 Marianist Education Heritage and Future

1 Marianist Charism and Educational Mission

2 Principles of Marianist Educational Praxis

3 Marianist Education and Context

4 Identity of Marianist Education

5 Marianist Educational Praxis: Institutions, Agents and Recipients

6 Leadership and Animation

7 New Education in New Scenarios



MARIANIST EDUCATION
HERITAGE AND FUTURE

