

“Marian Spirituality at Home”

Our Faith and Mary: A Symposium to Celebrate the Year of Faith

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The Marian Spirituality at Home is a practical application of the Marianist Spirituality applied to our every day life in our families.²

Our Vocation

It is important to remember that our personal vocation is a response to an invitation from God to follow Jesus. Each one of us is called to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us are called to follow him through the sacrament of Marriage, being open to life, creating a family, beings co-creator with God. We are called to be holy, to be perfect, to become the “best version of ourselves.”³

Meditating and thinking about our personal vocation creates within us abundant life in our spirit. Our personal vocation generates within us abundant life in our hearts, which is the life of the Holy Spirit.

We create our own Spirituality in the way we actually live our personal vocation as a response to an invitation from God to follow Jesus. Our personal spirituality is the particular method that we have to live this abundant life from the Holy Spirit. We have a very close model, our Blessed Mother, who will help us to live our personal vocation.

It is very interesting to note that our vocation has two important dimensions. One is the personal and the other dimension is related to a particular community. Our personal dimension is the particular answer that we made to the invitation to follow Jesus. However, our personal dimension can only be realized within a community, the Church and, our particular families or communities. The personal and the communal dimensions are interrelated and one affects the other. For example, in our Personal vocation, one characteristics of our personal spirituality is that it comes from a common method that we receive from our own family. Maybe our parents taught us how to pray, they introduced us to the Sacraments, and they showed us particular traditions that we carry on in our lives today.

The communal dimension of our personal vocation is related to the particular mission that God gave us as part of our vocation. Our mission is necessary for our personal sanctification but it is lived within the Church or a community. This is common to all different ways to live any vocation. In the religious or consecrated life, the personal vocation is related to a particular (religious) community. In the marriage life, the personal vocation is related to a particular

² To learn more about the Marianist Spirituality you can read “**A Manual of Marianist Spirituality**” by Quentin Hakenewerth S.M. This is an adaptation of that work applied to the family.

³ Expression taken from Matthew Kelly. See <http://www.matthewkelly.com> and <http://www.lighthousecatholicmedia.org/store/title/becoming-the-best-version-of-yourself>

family. However, no matter which is the community in which we live our personal mission, we could do it successfully by imitating the virtues of Jesus and our Blessed Virgin Mother.

Living our mission from our personal vocation means building the Church. It is really wonderful to think of our family as another way to answer to the call to live the virtues of Jesus, as the fulfillment of our particular mission using our personal spirituality. How beautiful is to realize that we have a mission not only as individuals but also as a community, for many of us in a family. This is very important today, because we observe the consequences of social sin around us. We are called to fight this social sin through social grace that works within our communities and families where we live our faith.

I believe that there are as many spiritualities or different ways to live the virtues of Jesus as people are. Nonetheless, because of the communal dimension of our vocation, there are also groups of people who practice the same or similar types of spiritualities that people share. The Marianist Spirituality is one of them. I am a lay Marianist and as such I follow and I would like to propose to you a Marianist Spirituality that I apply in my own family, and I try to live at home following the teachings of Blessed Fr. William Joseph Chaminade.⁴

Marianist Spirituality

William Joseph Chaminade, was a diocesan priest from the diocese of Périgueux where he was born in 1761. At the beginning of the French Revolution William Joseph went to Bordeaux where he exercised a clandestine ministry and managed to elude the police until there was a peaceful time beginning in 1795. After a period of public ministry laws against priests were established, and he was forced to go into exile in 1797. He chose Saragossa Spain where there is the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar (Mary appeared on a pillar to the Apostle James to encourage him when he was evangelizing Spain).

Marianist tradition holds that Fr. Chaminade had a private revelation, and it has traditionally been placed here in Saragossa at the shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar. He never said much explicitly about this revelation, and the evidence for it comes from a few chance remarks made in passing and his ongoing conviction that Mary herself was the founder of the Society of Mary and that he was only putting into concrete terms what she wanted. The ministry, which occupied him for the rest of his life, began upon his return to Bordeaux from exile in November 1800. By December he had opened a small oratory and was exercising his ministry there when he proposed to some young men of Bordeaux to begin the Marian Sodality, what today might be something like the Small (or Basic) Christian Communities or a youth movement. Today Marianists call such groups Marianist Lay Communities.

In the movement or organization he eventually included sections for young women,

⁴ Blessed William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850) is the founder of the Society of Mary, Marianists on October 2, 1817 and the he Marianist Sisters, the Daughters of Mary on May 25, 1816. See <http://www.marianist.org/site.php?menuaccess=22>

married men and married women and priests. Within the Sodality, some groups of people took private vows and these groups are the inspiration for what is today, the Alliance Mariale. Fr. Chaminade was successful enough that other groups in other towns in southwestern France wanted to be affiliated to the Bordeaux Sodality and modeled themselves on its organization. These were lay people providing support in living a Christian life to one another and acting as a means of re-evangelization after the Revolution by actively attracting others to join this interesting and active association.

The founder of the Marianist Sisters, Adele de Batz de Trenquelléon, was the leader of one of the affiliated sodalities and had come into contact with Fr. Chaminade in 1808. By 1816 she and a number of her companions in the Association were interested in religious life and under Fr. Chaminade's direction began the Daughters of Mary in May 1816 at Agen. The idea of the founders was to have a group which would continue the apostolate begun within the sodality and be a help and a support to the sodality group. A year later, after the great mission of Bordeaux preached by the Missionaries of France of Fr. Rauzan, a member of the Bordeaux Sodality group, Jean-Baptiste Lalanne (21 years old), went to Fr. Chaminade (who was 56 at the time) offering himself as his collaborator. From this meeting came the beginnings of the Society of Mary. Lalanne and Chaminade recruited four others from the Sodality to the idea. At the end of a discernment retreat they founded the Society of Mary on October 2, 1817, feast of the Holy Guardian Angels.

Fr. Chaminade considered all the members of the Marianist Family missionaries, and the Society a permanent mission. They had had a particular devotion to the Immaculate Conception to which the Sodality had been dedicated (showing special devotion to Mary at a time when the dogma had not yet been proclaimed). They too continued to be part of the Sodality and to help and support it, while at the same time entering into an apostolate of education (a number of the first members were teachers at a private secondary school run by one of the sodalists in Bordeaux). Another particular feature of the foundation was that it would include a real mix of people: priests and lay, as well as teachers and workers (or professionals and artisans; those with liberal education and those with technical skills). In fact, the first members included two seminarians, three teachers, a couple of businessmen and a couple of barrel makers.

There are some Marianist expressions like: "the Lord has chosen new wars," a "nation of saints," "multiplication of Christians," "You are all missionaries," "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5), which try to summarize the "Marianist's spirituality" and the especial Marianists' devotion to the person of Mary and her mission rather than to single devotional practice. We celebrate the feast of the Holy Name of Mary on September 12 as our patronal feast.

Fr. Chaminade died on January 22, 1850. He was beatified on September 3, 2000 along with John XXIII, Pius IX, Columba Marmion, and Thomas Reggio.

During the lifetime of the founder the Marianists became heavily involved in education in schools, both primary and secondary and began a world wide expansion, first to Switzerland during the founder's lifetime and shortly afterward, North America. In the 1880's there was a very significant expansion to Canada, the Hawaiian Islands, Spain, Japan, North Africa. In more recent years there have been foundations in various countries in Africa, South America and, in

India, to mention a few.

Since the days of the Founders, Marianists have also been involved in a diversity of works. Today, in addition to their commitment to the apostolate of education, there is a great emphasis on work with Marianist Lay Communities, and many other ministries, which help to develop personal faith and communities of faith in book publishing, parishes, spirituality centers, development programs, just to name a few.

The Marianist Family today is spread around the world in more than 40 countries and is comprised of about ten thousand members. The Marianist Family is comprised of separate, yet interconnected, branches: Lay Marianist Communities (MLC-CLM), the Alliance Mariale, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Marianist sisters - FMI) and the Society of Mary (Marianist Brothers and Priests - SM).

Collaboration among the branches is a hallmark of Marianist life today with Marianist Laity, Brothers, Priests, and Sisters working together to respond to the needs of our times and to address spiritual growth within the Marianist Family.

Model of Mary

In following our personal vocation, answering God's invitation to follow Jesus Christ, we have an excellent model who can help us, our Blessed Mother. She is actually the best model that we can think of because she can help us to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit and she can teach us how to live from our faith.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God that wants to communicate HIS life and power to us. Our Blessed Virgin Mother received the Holy Spirit for her Faith in the Annunciation and God became man through the Mystery of the Incarnation.

Mary is our model of Faith, we have to follow her example in the Annunciation and practice our personal and familiar faith to experiment the real presence of God in our personal life and in our families.

In order to do it we have to practice to imitate our Blessed Mother in the Annunciation.

Practice the Presence of God

So, how do we live our family vocation using a Marian spirituality, following Mary in the Annunciation? Father Chaminade said that if we want to really live our vocation we have to live in the presence of God.

We have to live in the presence of God in our daily lives. God is presented in ourselves and in our homes, he loves us and he wants to share his abundant life with us. We have to make an effort to be aware of his presence and feel comfortable with it.

Fr. Chaminade teaches us that we acquire this attitude of being aware that we live in the presence of God through the repetition of acts of faith in his presence.

The best way is to imitate our Blessed Mother by keeping in our hearts what we are living and offer it to God. For example, offering your day in the morning with your spouse and kids through Mary to God. Offering our work to Mary as an instrument of God and a source for our sanctification and the sanctification of our spouse and kids. Taking our daily crosses. Everything we do. Changing diapers, preparing the food, cleaning the house, making the dishes or working are sources of sanctification and opportunities to practice doing those things in the presence of God.

Fr. Chaminade says that if we live in the presence of God through the repetition of acts of faith in our family life, we are going to grow in openness and receptivity for the grace of God in ourselves necessary to do his will.

Find your Method

I invite you to find your own method of living in the presence of God through the repetition of acts of faith taking Mary as our model. Here there are some ideas that you could implement:

- Find your favorite Prayers
- Use a daily Consecration to Jesus through Mary as a family
- Practice Marian Devotions as a family
- Unite together in front of Marian Image at home
- Frequent the Sacraments, especially Confession and Eucharist. Renew regularly the graces of your sacrament of Matrimony.
- Imitate the Virtues and the model of Mary and St. Joseph

Marian Spirituality

A Marian Spirituality is a set of principles, norms and methods that we follow to live our vocation. In a Marian Spirituality, Mary is our model, we want to imitate her. We want to experience in our lives the mystery of the Annunciation so Jesus can be incarnated in our own lives.

As a method in a Marian Spirituality, we could live our Faith by practicing being in the presence of God through the repetition of acts of faith in our daily labor.

Fr. Chaminade says that our Faith makes real all the things that were not real before. He says that “faith of the mind” is accepting with our mind as true something that we cannot probe.

As Mary, we accept something as true, not because we fully understand it or because we have probes but because we believe in him who has revealed it to us. Our Faith is more confidence than intelligence. For our Faith we expand our reality, enrich our reality; it gives a new meaning to it.

For Fr. Chaminade, our faith has a second dimension, our faith supposes not only accepting with our minds that something is true but also we have to embrace it with our feelings, with our hearts like Mary ponders in her heart. Fr. Chaminade calls it the “faith of the heart.”

Our Method of Marian Spirituality

So, bringing Mary into our homes also means to imitate her in creating our personal/familiar method of Marian spirituality to live our Vocation by practicing being in the presence of God through the repetition of acts of faith in our daily labor.

Here it is an example of a possible “Marian Spirituality recipe”:

- 1) First we have to deepen the content of our personal faith. You could ask yourself, what is what I believe (with your mind)? For example: “I believe that Jesus calls me to share my life in Matrimony with my spouse, to grow in holiness by imitating our Blessed Mother and the Holy Family of Nazareth.”
- 2) Then, your act of faith has to express your answer. For example: “I want to follow you and I accept my vocation ...”
- 3) Your act of faith also has to express your feelings (what is in your heart). For example: “for my loving precious kids, I give you thanks with all my heart.”
- 4) Now I invite you to create an act of Faith bringing our Blessed Mother into your homes.
- 5) I invite you to recite it frequently, daily by practicing it in the presence of God.
- 6) I invite you to be attentive to the consequence for your lives of this practical “Marian Spirituality.” The practice of your Faith in your home will make your vocation a reality; through your Faith you will incarnate the presence of God in your heart and in your home, like Mary did in the Annunciation.