



TO BE A LAY MARIANIST

WITHIN A MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

From the International Team of MLCs, we present this simple document in response to the rising need in different parts of the world to clarify who we are and how we are organized as Lay Marianists. May it help us to avoid confusion not only among the laity, but also within the other branches of the Marianist Family.

The official documents of the MLCs define our identity clearly and richly and are fully valid. The Pontifical Council on the Laity recognizes Marianist Lay Communities as an “international private association of the faithful.” This designation is based on our statutes and the international documents. We invite you to rediscover the richness and freshness of our charism through these documents.¹

“To be a lay Marianist within a MLC” is not only the result of the work and reflection of the International Team but has also been enriched by the contributions of our brothers and sisters from the other branches of the Marianist Family (Society of Mary, the Alliance Mariale, and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate). We wanted to share this document with the other branches, even though it could have been approved independently, because we do not want our Marianist Family to continue walking in four parallel lines, which go in the same direction but do not converge. We believe that we must enrich each other and in this spirit, we pray, share, and discern together as a Family.

The document is simple and brief: a description of what it means to be a lay Marianist and to be a Marianist Lay Community, a guide for new MLCs, and a paragraph dedicated to people who work in Marianist ministries.

We bring it to you with confidence in the Lord who guides our steps. We are aware that our being Marianist is a vocation, like that of the other branches of our Family. We belong to a MLC because the Lord has called us to collaborate in the building of the Kingdom as Lay Marianists embedded in the world. Being, like Mary, simple witnesses of the presence of God where we are.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LAY MARIANIST

A Lay Marianist’s identity can be summed up as:

A Lay Marianist is one who KNOWS, COMMITS TO, and LIVES the Marianist Charism.

1. **To KNOW** means that the Lay Marianist has learned the basics of Marianist history and charism. This formation includes information about the founders and the common elements of the Marianist charism and spirituality. The specific style and length of this formation may vary from country to country as long as it is consistent with our international documents. Usually this process covers a period of time from six months to

¹ Published on our website www.clm-mlc.org



several years. The formation may include formal classes, periodic talks by experienced Marianists (SM, FMI, AM, or Lay), reading resource material, and active involvement in a Marianist Lay Community. The National Responsible, in consultation with the Regional Responsible, is responsible for the process in each country.

2. **To COMMIT** means that after initial formation, the individual makes an explicit commitment to accept the Marianist charism to guide their life. To be a Lay Marianist is not a private commitment but should be shared with others. Lay Marianists are recognized by the International Organization of the MLCs (the International Team) through the National Responsible or their delegate. Commitments are usually renewed annually. Once a person expresses this commitment they are considered a Lay Marianist within a MLC.
3. **To LIVE** as a Lay Marianist means that commitment is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing lifestyle in which one continues to grow in understanding one's vocation and participation in community life.
4. **MARIANIST CHARISM** includes the pillars of:
 - a. **Faith** – Flowing from one's baptismal promise, a Lay Marianist embraces her/his vocation to follow Christ. "Faith of the heart ponders our knowledge of God, infuses it with love, and impels us to transform that loving relationship into concrete actions in our lives."²
 - b. **Community** – Marianists value the experience of uniting to others to grow in faith. Generally this is done through participation in a local community. When this is not possible, virtual (cyber) communities can fill this need, or the individual may propose creating community among those who are available in his or her locale. Our communities are inclusive and welcoming. Within the Marianist Family, union without confusion and a discipleship of equals are a sign of our identity.
 - c. **Mission** – Marianists are always called to make our Church and our world a better place. We do not exist only for our own well-being but to respond to those in need both near and far.
 - d. **Mary** – All of our work is done in the spirit of Mary bringing Christ to the world. We seek to have the spirit of humility and justice exemplified in Mary's Magnificat, permeate our being.

In order to carry out our vocation as Lay Marianists, it is very helpful to have practices that unite us and give form to our commitment. These are often called a **"Plan of Life"** or **"Rule of Life"** and include such things as

- Regularly attend community gatherings
- Cultivate a personal and communal prayer life
- Develop a personal and community mission to be "present in the world"³

² Circular#4. Isabella R. Moyer "Faith of the Heart in the Heart of the World"

³ "For us, being present in the world means attempting to know, love, and transform with the heart and the strength of Christ Jesus." The Mission of Marianist Lay Communities (Liria, 1997)



- Unite in prayer with the whole Marianist Family through prayers such as the 3:00 O'clock Prayer
- Support (financially) the local, national, and international organization
- Connect with other branches of the Marianist Family

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITY

Lay Marianists normally gather in Marianist Lay Communities (MLCs). These communities:

- A. Consist of a group of Lay Marianists who have had some formation. Since MLCs value inclusivity and are open to new people joining, there are often people who are exploring the community and are in different stages of formation and commitment.
- B. Meet regularly.
- C. Pray together.
- D. Educate themselves about spiritual, moral, and ethical issues of the day.
- E. Seek to deepen their spirituality through personal and communal discernment and participation in mission.
- F. Build community by sharing their faith life and personal needs with each other.
- G. Keep connected with the National (or Regional) Responsible.
- H. Are self-sustaining financially and contribute to the needs of the national and international organization.

MLC Recognition:

The International Team is responsible for recognition of MLCs and shares this responsibility with the National Responsible.

The process for recognition of a new MLC is:

1. **REQUEST** – An emerging MLC requests recognition through the National Responsible.
2. **REPORT** – The emerging MLC fills out a report describing their formation. (See Report)
3. **VISIT** – The National Responsible or a delegate visits the emerging MLC to give support and assess its viability.
4. **NEW FOUNDATION** - In the case of the first MLC in a country, the Regional Responsible receives the request and the report. The responsible visits and is the primary contact with the emerging MLC.
5. **DISCERNMENT PERIOD** – Over a period of one year the emerging MLC and National Responsible discern together the sustainability of the MLC. This process and discernment period may be shortened if other branches of the Marianist Family or nearby MLCs can confirm the viability of an emerging MLC.
6. **RECOGNITION** – Upon mutual agreement the MLC is recognized by the International Team of the MLCs through the National Responsible.

MARIANIST SPONSORED MINISTRY COLLABORATORS

In the Marianist world we are blessed to have many sponsored ministries such as schools, retreat centers, parishes, social justice projects, etc. We are grateful to the employees and volunteers in these ministries. These collaborators often receive



formation in the Marianist charism so that their work may reflect the values of the Marianist sponsored ministry.

If, after discernment, a collaborator explicitly expresses her/his desire to become a Lay Marianist and join an MLC, then the National Responsible confirms that person as a Lay Marianist following the process of initiation of each country.

- *Document approved by the International Team of the MLCs in Rome and presented to the World Council of the Marianist Family in November 2016.*

