



# Year of Shared Discernment

## An Invitation for Reflection and Conversation



Artwork by Bro. Brian Zampier

### Module 2: To Know the Charism

Every spiritual tradition in the Church has a set of grace-filled characteristics that give life to the spirituality. The Church refers to these as a charism. Brother Tom Giardino, SM, describes these characteristics as a sign of the “Holy Spirit working in and through” the natural beliefs and talents of the founders.

We call these grace-filled characteristics our Marianist “charism.”

Charism gives each spiritual tradition its culture and “personality”—how those who follow the traditions live, work, and impact the world. There are Jesuit traditions, Benedictine traditions, Franciscan traditions and many others besides Marianist traditions. If you visit a community in these various traditions, you will find their prayer life, work life, and mission interests to be quite different, depending upon where their charism takes them. All are wonderful examples of “doorways” to God and God’s work, and they attract people to God in different ways.

You undoubtedly know that Lay Marianists come to the Marianist Family from all walks of life and with varying levels of experience and knowledge of the Marianist charism. Many things can be learned simply by belonging, but knowing the charism requires study, prayer and conversation. Over the years there have been a variety of formal and informal formation experiences. These range from programs sponsored by the Marianist Family Council of North America, the Society of Mary and Marianist institutions to self-study, community meetings on specific topics, and coursework through the North American Center for Marianist Studies. Because communities are always evolving and welcoming new members, it is possible for members to be at different places in their understanding of the Marianist charism

Regardless of your level of formation, we invite you to explore the Marianist charism.

In Module 1, *We are Called*, you learned that our Marianist spirituality is focused on the incarnation: God becoming human, and Mary showing us how to continuously bring Christ into the world. In Module 2, *To Know the Charism*, you will deeply explore the five core manifestations (or pillars) of the Marianist charism: Faith,



Mission, Mary, Community, and Inclusivity. The graphic above was created by Brian Zampier, SM to depict the five manifestations of the Marianist Charism.

It is interesting that in the North American region, “Inclusivity” is pulled out of “Community” as a pillar of its own. However, those in the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities (IO-MLC) consider Inclusivity to be a subset under Community. IO-MLC sees inclusivity as one important way we *do* community, along with Mixed Composition, Welcoming, Hospitality, etc. Therefore they do not see that it is necessary to pull out Inclusivity as separate. However, in North America the “doorway” of Inclusivity is one that attracts many people to our spiritual tradition, especially those who sometimes feel left out of the traditional Church. For those reasons, Inclusivity is an important gift of the Holy Spirit for those of us in North America to raise up and celebrate!

At the end of Module 2, you should be able to answer these two key questions:

- **How does the Marianist charism concretely look when it is understood deeply by an individual or a community?**
- **What are the ways the Marianist charism could impact the larger Church and the world?**

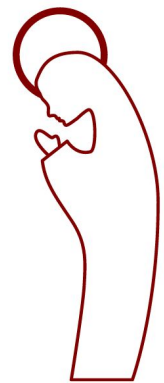
**The key learning experience for this module** is to deeply describe each of the five manifestations of the Marianist Charism. Reflect about how each of these pillars look when a person or a community is “living” them. Then consider what impact these characteristics have on other people and systems when they are understood fully. You may also identify areas you’d like to explore more deeply to gain a fuller understanding.

*Module 2 was written by Marceta Reilly, Harvest Prayer MLC and Our Lady of the Round Table, & Susan Vogt, Anawim MLC and Visitation Marianist State Community*

## PRAY

*Please take a moment to center yourself and remind yourself that you are in the presence of God. This first “Pray” section of each module is meant to be used as a centering tool for each individual lay Marianist as you open your heart to diving into this reflection and discernment process.*

Lord, thank You for this opportunity to study and share our Marianist tradition more deeply.  
In this quiet moment, we thank you that we are together in mind, heart, soul and spirit to carry us through the learning this day.  
Give us the wisdom and strength to face the challenges before us.  
Bless the tasks we take on this day  
Bless our families, Marianist communities, and all those close to us.  
Indeed, bless **all** people on earth, for their needs and concerns are also precious to You.  
Mary, we turn especially to you.  
Like you, help us better understand your son, Jesus, so that we can help you bring him into our world.  
May our efforts today contribute to building the kind of world which God calls us to develop and protect.  
Amen.



*Prayer by Susan Vogt. Adapted by Marceta Reilly*



## REFLECT

The “Reflect” section of each module is meant to be used as an individual discernment tool. We recommend that each individual Lay Marianist read through at least one of the Cornerstone Resources below and take time to reflect on them and discern and record responses to the questions below independently. There are other resources for this topic on the master resources list if you wish to delve deeper into this topic.

### Cornerstone resources:

1. [Our Marianist Heritage](#), by Joseph Stefanelli, SM. Fr. Stefanelli discusses Father Chaminade’s spirituality, its scriptural and historical underpinnings, Mary and some of her titles, and the concept of community within the institute and within the Church as a whole. – \$8.00/ea - available from NACMS, [www.nacms.org](http://www.nacms.org)
2. [International Lay Marianist documents](#) - Available on the [MLC-NA website](#)
  - [The Identity of Marianist Lay Communities](#), Santiago, Chile, 1993
  - [The Mission of Marianist Lay Communities](#), Liria, Spain, 1997
  - [Being in Community](#), Philadelphia, USA, 2001

*Additional resources for consideration are available on the master list of resources.*

After spending time with the above resources, we encourage you to **reflect and fill in the following tool: [Charism Reflection Form](#)**. This reflection form is meant to help us understand the characteristics outside of the head and *feel it* from the heart. We hope this tool makes the Marianist charism much more concrete and experiential.

### Reflection Questions:

1. Which manifestation of the Marianist Charism (Faith, Mission, Mary, Community, Inclusivity) most drew you to the Marianist spirituality?
2. What pillars of Marianist life are easiest for you to understand?
3. Which pillars are most challenging for you to know and appreciate?

## DISCUSS

The “Discuss” section of each module is meant to be used as a tool to foster dialogue and discussion within Marianist Lay Communities. The questions below as well as the “Reflect” questions above can be discussed and shared at a community meeting. However, these questions can still be answered by individual Lay Marianists.



1. How do you currently understand your mission and commitment to the Marianist charism?
2. Which Marianist manifestations stand out as a priority for your community or yourself?
3. Which manifestations does your community appreciate?
4. How has your community brought people closer to God?
5. What might be an area of growth for your community?

**SHARE**

The “Share” section of each module is a call to action for individual Lay Marianists and Marianist Lay Communities to share what they are learning with others in the Marianist Family and to build our collective wisdom and knowledge. Please read over the options below and choose at least one of them to share your experiences either as an individual or community.

	<b>If you are an individual Lay Marianist who is not in an active community:</b>	<b>If you are a Lay Marianist who is engaged in an active Marianist Lay community:</b>
<b>Option 1:</b>	Personally attend or have at least one member of your MLC attend a Zoom meeting hosted by our regional Area Reps (two at each meeting) each month to share dialogue and reflection with other Marianist Lay communities. Here is the schedule with Zoom links to join: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2nd Monday of the month 7-8 pm CT/8-9 pm ET: <a href="#">Zoom Link to Join</a> Passcode: Marianist</li> <li>- 3rd Tuesday of the month 7-8 pm CT/8-9 pm ET: <a href="#">Zoom Link to Join</a> Passcode Marianist</li> <li>- 4th Monday of the month 7-8 pm PT/4-5 PM HT: <a href="#">Zoom Link to Join</a> Passcode: Marianist</li> </ul>	
<b>Option 2:</b>	Reach out to <a href="mailto:discernment@mlc-na.org">discernment@mlc-na.org</a> to request being paired with another Lay Marianist, whom you will meet with, dialogue with and share the knowledge you are gaining from reflection on this Module 2.	Reach out to <a href="mailto:discernment@mlc-na.org">discernment@mlc-na.org</a> to request being paired with another Marianist Lay community. You and a contact from the assigned community will determine how to share knowledge from Module 2 between your communities.

**LEARN**

The “Learn” section of each module is meant to be a reflective piece for communities and individuals to bring back to themselves (often at a community meeting) after sharing their knowledge and learning with others in the Marianist Family after participating in one of the options in the Share section.

1. Summarize key ideas and insights you have learned from your study and discussions about the Marianist Charism.



2. What are ways the Marianist Charism could impact the larger Church and the world?
3. What aspects of the charism will you be more intentional about in the future?
4. What aspects will help your Lay Community deepen in the future?

**ACTION**

The "Action" section of each module is the culmination of the reflection, interaction, and discernment throughout the entirety of the module. This may be best explored within the time of a community meeting (and can be combined with the "Learn" section). Respond to one or more of the questions or actions provided below with your community or reflect on them as an individual Lay Marianist. **Please pay special attention to submitting an individual and/or community survey so MLC-NA can use your insights from Module 2 as we move forward.**

1. Submit a survey response to MLC-NA so that we can collect your thoughts, insights, and actions moving forward from Module 2.

If you are an individual Lay Marianist who is not in an active community:	If you are a Lay Marianist who is engaged in an active Marianist Lay community:
Fill in the following: <a href="#">Individual Module 2 Survey</a> to share your thoughts with MLC-NA and other Lay Marianists.	Fill in the following: <a href="#">MLC Module 2 Survey</a> to share your thoughts with MLC-NA and other Marianist Lay communities. All members of active Marianist Lay communities may additionally fill in the <a href="#">Individual Module 2 Survey</a> if you wish.

2. What will help you deepen your *understanding and appreciation* of the Marianist charism?
3. What will help **your Community** deepen their *understanding and appreciation* of the Marianist charism?
4. How could MLC-NA help you or your community deepen your *understanding and appreciation* of the Marianist charism?
5. Describe one way you or your community demonstrates its understanding of the Marianist charism?
6. Write a prayer that focuses attention on each manifestation of the charism and places them in your heart for reflection.



## PRAY

*This closing “Pray” section of each module is a time to gather your reflections close to your heart as you move forward in the days ahead.*

Center yourself with a couple of deep, cleansing breaths, then begin the prayer...

**Our Intention:** O Most Holy Mary, mother of Jesus and mother of us all—Thank you for the many ways you watch over us and take our deepest needs to heart. We ask you especially to be with us during this Year of Shared Study so that we might heed your guidance and join you in bringing Christ again to the world. Please be with us always!

**Call for Strength and Guidance:**

Mary of the Magnificat, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Give us courage to defend the poor.

Lady of Fatima, Nurture our faith.

Lady of Lourdes, Hold and heal us, body and soul.

Mary of Medjugorje, Queen of Peace, End the division that rips nations and homes apart.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Help us pray for our enemies and banish our fears.

O Lady of Grace, Fill us.

O Lady of Charity, Transform us.

O Lady of Assumption, Lift us.

Madonna and Queen, Virgin and Mother,

Give us wisdom to hold holy opposites  
together,

Give us tenderness toward others.

Give us strength to persevere.

Lady of Sorrows, may we always remember what your Son did for love.

Blessed Theotokos (God Bearer), help us carry Jesus into the world for...

**You have given the world its true light, Jesus your Son—the Son of God. You abandoned yourself completely to God’s call and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him. Show us Jesus. Lead us to him. Teach us to know and love him, so that we too can become capable of true love and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world. Amen!**

*Intention and Call for Guidance by Mary Lynn Hendrickson. Adapted by Susan Vogt.  
Bolded Ending from Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict XVI*

