

Sharing Our Marianist Stories Ep. 38 Transcript

Facilitating Connections (with Meghann Naveau, Nancy Woeste, and Mike Bennett)

00:03 - Meghann Naveau

Both becoming a parishioner at QAC and becoming part of the Family Council and the larger Marianist Family, I think, was a really soft landing place for me where I was in my faith journey and in what I had experienced in the broader Church, and so what we experience in the broader Church influences what we think of God and what our experience with God is.

00:23 - Mike Bennett

Welcome to *Sharing our Marianist Stories*, a podcast produced by the North American Center for Marianist Studies in Dayton, Ohio. I'm Mike Bennett, Media Administrator for NACMS. In this episode, we hear the stories of Meghann Naveau and Nancy Woeste, recorded in early December 2023. Meghann and Nancy are Lay Marianists serving on the Dayton Marianist Family Council and have been part of the Queen of Apostles Community, or QAC, which transitioned from a non-territorial Marianist parish to a Lay community on January 1st, 2024. They share about their experiences of serving on the temporalities committee of the Dayton Marianist Family Council and how that engagement positioned them to help the Marianist Family respond to needs within the city of Dayton. They also share about the impact the Marianist Family has had on them and some upcoming steps for the Dayton Marianist Family to enhance their engagement in solidarity initiatives in the Dayton area.

01:25 - Mike Bennett

One additional item of note is that Meghann and Nancy will refer to *Full of Grace Ministries*, which is a collaborative effort of Our Lady of Grace parish and the Dayton Marianist Family. Most *Full of Grace* work happens at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, part of Our Lady of Grace parish family, which was recently created as a result of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's *Beacons of Light* restructure. I'm hopeful you'll enjoy hearing Meghann and Nancy's stories and be inspired to think about how the Marianist Family is calling you to be a catalyst for solidarity and the common good in your local context. With that, let's turn it over to Meghann to get us started.

02:07 - Meghann Naveau

My name is Meghann Naveau. I've been part of the Marianist Family, I guess officially, for the last couple of years as a Lay Marianist here in Dayton, Ohio. My family and I are parishioners for at least the next few weeks at Queen of Apostles parish, and my husband, Matt, and I have been really leading that transition work to becoming a Lay community as the parish completes at the end of December 2023. We're also part of a small Lay community here in Dayton with a total of five couples, all of us in the season of life where we have small kids. I think ours, in early elementary [school], are some of the oldest ones of the group, so that's been a really fun group of people just to do life with.

02:49 - Meghann Naveau

We came to the Marianist Family, I would say officially, in the last couple of years. We really felt like the Holy Spirit brought us to QAC. We have a variety of events and things kind of at our former parish, but it quickly became very obvious that we had work to do as part of the Marianist Family. My husband and I are both UD [University of Dayton] grads, and so we certainly knew the Marianists from our time there, but neither of us did formal formation or anything as undergrads. And in some ways, I like to say I came to the Marianist Family kicking and screaming because my husband's been involved with MSJC [Marianist Social Justice Collaborative], and I think he was kind of dipping his toe into Marianist waters before we kind of jumped in wholeheartedly. And I was very content in our former parish and what we were doing there, and I didn't really feel like we needed to change things, thank you very much. But the Holy Spirit made it clear pretty quickly through current events that were happening at the time, through some things that we were dealing with in our family with some health challenges that this is where we needed to be.

03:51 – Meghann Naveau

And it's been a tremendous gift in the last few years, especially meeting people like Nancy, and just doing work with such wonderful people from all different kinds of backgrounds, but who are so rooted in the charism, and not just the charism, but the mission of living that in the world. I think having the pursuit of social justice, the spread of mind and inclusivity, and some of those things that are kind of our Marianist buzzwords really matters. And I think especially in this season of raising little kids, it's forced me to really look up how do I do that in my life and what does that look like? And I think being Marianist makes that easier in a way or just forces me to be really authentic.

04:30 - Nancy Woeste

So, I'm Nancy Woeste, and I'm a UD grad, and my husband is as well. But I really didn't get to know the Marianists until after I graduated from UD, and I was invited by a friend to a faith-sharing group called *Emmaus*, and it was life-changing. And it was very eye-opening in terms of intentional living. And we met through *Emmaus*, and four years later, we'd been going to Queen of Apostles Church together, and we got married there. And then we had three children, and they were all baptized there, and it felt very much like home. But then also we wanted our kids to have a Catholic education, so we had to enroll them in a school, and there's a benefit of tuition reduction if you are a member of the parish, so that's when we transitioned away from QAC toward the parish and being involved in the activities of school and the parish together. But then when our kids got to be in high school and college, and 2020 rolled around, and Church became at home and all of these things, when it was time to reemerge, we looked at, "Well, what do we do? Where do we go back to?" And QAC felt like home again.

05:56 - Nancy Woeste

But I remember being involved in the Marianist Family Council and being involved in some of the solidarity initiatives. And the transition that QAC was going through with not being a parish anymore. And there was this connection with one of the members who said, “You know who you should talk to is Meghann Naveau. She has such a sense of the Marianist charism and such a lovely person. She might be able to help you out with some of the Marianist Family Council things that you're talking about.” I reached out to her, and at the time I was like, “Well, do you want to just come over to my house, and we can get to know each other and just chat over tea or whatever?” And so, we did. And I have a gazebo in the backyard, and we sat out there, and it was a lovely day, and we talked about the solidarity initiatives. And I knew when I walked out the door that I was going to be a part of this, but I said, “I told you. I had to think about it.” Just to be sure, but yeah, I mean it's been a wonderful experience to be able to work with her on these things through the Family Council.

07:12 - Meghann Naveau

I came onto the Family Council in the Fall of 2022. So, we had been at work at QAC on the transition stuff for the better part of that year. And in that summer, I think, when the nominations were open to join the Family Council, I remember telling Matt, “I just really want to do this. I don't really know why. I just feel really called to apply.” And so, even coming on to the Council that fall, I just felt like, “Okay, God, what are we doing here? Why do I need to be here? What is my work to do here?” And then, when Nancy reached out and I told him, I was like, “Yeah, we were on this phone call. I'm going to go have coffee at her house.” And I was there for like four hours, at least three. It was a very long time!

07:55 - Nancy Woeste

It was a good, long afternoon.

07:58 - Meghann Naveau

Yeah, and it was lovely. And we found all these places that our lives just had had very similar twists and turns and overlaps and commonalities. Leaving from there, I knew I was like, “There's something here, you know, like, this is going to be really good. I just don't know what it looks like yet.” And it has been.

08:15 - Nancy Woeste

And I guess I should kind of circle back to the whole idea of what brought my husband and I back to the Marianist Family, and it is that sense of community. It is Marianist *Family*. It is a place that you always feel like it's home. And that's how we felt when we got married at QAC. QAC was our Church/Home. Having our children baptized there, it felt like home. And after that time of [Covid-19] quarantine and doing Mass online and in various ways, and we really have to

look at each other and say, “What feels like home?” and it's the Marianist Family... *Emmaus* had kind of disbanded when our kids were little, and I feel like we weren't involved in the Marianist Family for the time that our kids were growing up, like their grade school years. But then in 2015, we joined *Micah 6:8* [Lay Community], and I think that was our reintroduction into the Marianist Family again starting to feel like, “Oh, yeah, I've missed this. I want to be involved in the charism and the social justice aspects of what the Marianist Family does.”

09:39 – Nancy Woeste

Then, in 2018, our community was asked, “Do you have any representatives who would like to come and help plan a day of discernment?” And so, it was actually Andrea Wall and I both said, “Sure, we'll help.” And so, we did. And so, we had this day of discernment, and what we settled on at the end of the day is that we wanted to have three solidarity initiatives that we focused our attention on as a Family. So, they were Mission of Mary Cooperative and the Dakota Center – which the Dakota Center has a long history of Marianist influence foundationally, and then the newer Mission of Mary [Cooperative] - And so, one is on the west side, and one is on the east side [of Dayton]. But then there was also this beautiful brainchild about collaborating with Food for the Journey and Corpus Christi Church, known as Our Lady of Grace. And because there was already a Marianist presence at Food for the Journey - the Novitiate brothers would come and help serve and there were a few of us Marianist Family members volunteering. I was one of them, you know, to serve the meals - And we said, “You know what? There is a way that maybe the Madonna Room could be like the community center for people in on the west side, kind of near Grandview Kettering Health Network.” So, we started in with those three initiatives, and we called the third one the Five Oaks initiative.

11:19 – Nancy Woeste

During the Covid shut-down, one of the things that we started doing was respite bags, because they were doing to-go meals, and people needed things to get them from one week to the next. So, we started filling brown bags with shelf-stable snacks, and that seemed to blossom. Then when things started opening up, and we started saying, “What else can we do? What other ways can we embrace this community and use this multi-purpose room at Our Lady of Grace?” It kind of morphed into a new initiative that we're calling the *Full of Grace Ministries*, where we've had the opportunity to do a community picnic and wellness fair back in the Spring of 2023, and we're still looking at ways where we can collaborate with Food for the Journey. And we've been able to continue to collaborate with Kettering Health Network and community gardens and things like that.

12:21 - Meghann Naveau

When I came on to the Family Council, we were coming out of that shutdown part of Covid, and there was such energy for, “Okay, how do we pick back up? What do we pick back up? We want to be really intentional about that.” And the Five Oaks Initiative at the time, then Full of Grace,

was definitely a spot of, “We know we want to pour time and energy into here based on what the Marianist Family has been involved with, but what does that look like?”

12:47 - Meghann Naveau

And Corpus Christi, specifically as part of Our Lady of Grace parish - like so many of our parishes - has faced a lot of challenges in the last several years. They have an aging population, they have fewer people who are coming, and they're in a neighborhood that's a lot of different things all at the same time. There's a lot of poverty alongside more traditional-looking homes. There's just all kinds of different factors going on. And they have this space, the Madonna Room, that's just sitting empty most of the time. So that was, like Nancy said, that was really the effort - or spark, I guess - of “What can we do in this community that brings people together and uses the space and tries to think differently about how we're Church?” So, there was a team of several of us from the Marianist Family, and then we met with several parishioners from Our Lady of Grace, too. People who had been in that neighborhood for a really long time and were really dedicated to being in that space as a constant.

13:45 – Meghann Naveau

I think sometimes when we talk about service work, there's this like, “Well, let's just drop in and fix something and hop back out.” And I think what I've seen from the Marianist Family is, “We don't do that.” We're here to be partners alongside people. So really listening - especially with the Our Lady of Grace parishioners - to “What do people in this community need? We see the opportunities here. We see Kettering Health down the road, What can we do here?” And so, really, the idea for the community picnic and wellness fair was born out of that kind of mutual sharing and connecting. Bro. Ray [Fitz, SM] was so wonderful at the beginning, too. “Yep, I know somebody at Kettering Health.” Just helping make those connections, and I know he has such a rich history of doing that in the city, bridging UD and the city. One of my favorite parts was getting to work with Bro. Ray. As a UD alum who was a student after he wasn't president anymore, I obviously knew his legacy and who he was. And honestly, it's still kind of a pinch-me moment of like, “Oh my gosh, Bro. Ray Fitz knows my name.” And just to get to learn from him has been such a gift, and just having him championing us as we went. He would refer to Nancy and I as champions.

14:55 – Nancy Woeste

Oh, my goodness.

14:57 – Meghann Naveau

When looked at me and said... “So, you're going to champion this!”

15:05 – Nancy Woeste

One of the opportunities that we have at Food for the Journey is we've started this prayer circle, which are basically listening sessions. And one time, four summers ago, two gentlemen came up to the prayer circle, and they just started talking about their experience of when they were kids growing up, and you always knew where everybody was because the bicycles were all in the front yard. And one guy talked about how his... grandmother who used her retirement to create summer camps for kids in the neighborhood. And he was an early teenager. And so, he was kind of supposed to be, like, one of the role models for the kids, like the camp counselor. One thing that he specifically remembers is some kids have never been out to Young's Dairy [a barn, market, and activity center in Yellow Springs, Ohio], and so she would spend her own money to take a group of kids out to Young's Dairy and buy them ice cream and let them pet the goats. And he told a story about how one kid, his baseball cap came off into the goat pen, and he reached in and grabbed it and put it back on the kid's head. And several years later, that child came up to him, now a grown person, and said, "I remember you. You're the one that rescued my baseball cap."

16:35 – Mike Bennett

That's funny.

16:36 – Nancy Woeste

And he was talking about the impression that that made on the children in that neighborhood. And I just love to think about the possibilities of what we could do in that neighborhood for children. Doing a summer camp kind of thing like that or collaborating with the Dakota Center in ways where maybe the kids that are usually in their summer camp, maybe we have a day where we go over to UD campus, and they get to swim in the RecPlex pool. And I'm sure there are all kinds of insurance issues related to that, but let's think about the possibilities. Long way to get around to sharing those ideas at Family Council – actually, probably at the temporalities committee, in fact. And Bro. Ray looking at me and going "Well, you're going to champion this, right?" And I'm like, "I am? I guess I am."

17:31 – Mike Bennett

I am now!

17:33 – Nancy Woeste

But I need a partner in crime. I need somebody to do this along with me. And that's when we sought out Meghann, and we do work well together and work as a team.

17:45 - Meghann Naveau

We are better together. We had that event in May, and we had 70 people from the neighborhood who came and participated. We had health screenings from Kettering Health in the Madonna

Room. And then, we had exercise station out front and like a trail mix station, Corpus Christi fryers had watermelon and burgers and hot dogs, and we had kids' activities and different things. And there was music in the sanctuary. So, it was just beautiful. The weather was perfect! That was kind of our [worry]. We were really worried about that. But it was just a really beautiful - what your traditional kind of neighborhood picnic feel, but also with the health [and] wellness kind of component, too.

18:28 – Nancy Woeste

And a lot of collaboration, too, because Food for the Journey made the pasta salad. So, there was all this collaboration that was happening between Kettering Health, Corpus Christi, Our Lady of Grace parish... And then we invited Queen of Apostles choir. And my son, since he's a music director at St. Leonard's [Senior Living Community], we invited their choir to sing. We invited Our Lady of Grace choir. So, the doors to the sanctuary were wide open. You could have the music flowing out so that people could say, "Oh, this is what a Catholic Church looks like. This is what it's all about." And so, it's a way to open our arms wide and hold them open for people to be received into the Family, into the charism, and that's kind of what we want to do.

19:22 – Meghann Naveau

Even really before the event, we were like, "So, what comes next? If we're not just going to be a drop in and do one thing, what are we doing next?" And so, there was a lot of prayer and kind of continued collaboration with folks from Kettering and just people at the neighborhood association, just trying to stay tapped into, "What's going on? What do people need?" We did surveys with the people who came to the picnic.

19:44 – Meghann Naveau

One of my favorite things that kind of was born out of this event that we did, there's a man named Bruce Kidney who started the Unity Gardens, just a few blocks from the Corpus Christi campus. And he has gardens, a community garden, kind of set up there for people. There are a lot of immigrants and refugees in that section of the neighborhood. And his dream was really, "Let's take this lot and make this a place that people can come together and garden." Nancy and I got to talk with Bruce, because Kelly from Kettering Grandview Foundation connected us with him as, "Hey, this is somebody else in the neighborhood who's working on something. Maybe there's some way that we can all collaborate here." And so, Nancy and I got to go talk with Bruce on a very hot August day, and just see the work that he was doing. And it was so neat because as we were standing there talking to him at the garden, it was very much visible to us that he was part of the neighborhood. People felt like they belonged with him, and he belongs there.

20:44 – Nancy Woeste

But he does not live in that neighborhood.

20:45 – Meghann Naveau

No. And he lives in Oakwood. And he also works at Grandview.

20:51 - Nancy Woeste

This is like his passion project. He has a passion for gardening, and he has a passion for helping people.

20:59 - Meghann Naveau

Yeah. And one of the things that he told us as he was walking us around – We asked, “What do you need?” Trying to think about how do we go back to *Full of Grace Ministry*, our partnership with Our Lady of Grace and the Marianist Family. What do we bring back that we can help connect people? Because one of the things we've talked about all along with this is we feel like our role here is to be connectors, to not be recreating stuff that's already happening in the neighborhood. That was one of the reasons we felt so strongly about doing the wellness fair and picnic. Nobody else in the neighborhood was doing something like that.

21:31 - Meghann Naveau

So, as we were talking with Bruce, he's like, “You know, I actually know some Marianist people.” Turns out they had a greenhouse that was donated to them that was here at Mount St. John. I think it was part of MEEC [Marianist Environmental Education Center], and that MEEC didn't need anymore, and they happily donated. Bruce's problem, though, was he didn't have a way to dig the holes other than by hand to be able to put this giant greenhouse, reconstruct it, in the northwest side of Dayton. So, as we were talking about that, we're like, “Oh, that's really interesting. That's a good thing to bring back and kind of think about.” So, Nancy and I brought that to one of our next Full of Grace meetings. And one of the women who was part of the team, she was a parishioner at Corpus, was like, “Well, how much does it cost to rent a post digger?” “I don't know. That's a great question.” So, long story short, when he was ready, we went back to Bruce, and we're like, “Keep us posted on how this develops.” When he was ready to start digging the holes and had had the quote from the person who was going to help him, there was a parishioner from Corpus Christi who ended up being the one to finance that project. And it was just such a neat kind of full circle moment for us.

22:42 – Meghann Naveau

In a way, it feels like we didn't really do anything here, right? You know, Nancy and I showed up to a meeting. We talked to some people. Then we went to another meeting and talked to some other people. Like, physically, we didn't really do much but talk. But at the same time, the way that we showed up as the Marianist Family and were involved helped connect the dots to this other group that also needed help and connected back to that first group. And so, there was a very real need of, “We need \$300,” I think. In the grand scheme of things, not [an] astronomical sum by any means, but to have someone who's like, “Yeah, I can do that. I'm willing to do that. I

just didn't know that that need even existed until somebody came back and told me about this.” And I think that to me is one of the best illustrations of what we've talked about as being connectors.

23:31 – Meghann Naveau

I think sometimes it can be really overwhelming, especially in social justice work or just in projects. And I think one of the things that I try to be really conscious of “What's mine to do here? What can I physically do as a mom, as a marketing and PR person, as a Lay Marianist, as a wife? I can't do all the things, but if I can have this conversation with this person that leads to this thing and ends up really blessing everybody involved...” For them to have a machine to dig the posts and not be trying to do that by hand, I'm sure, saved him a ton of time and effort that he could then pour back into “Okay, let's actually plant food and help people harvest and cook that food instead of just digging holes.” So really trying to find those efficiencies where we can, but also, it's such a reminder to me we're all in community. We talk about our small Lay Communities and our Marianist Family, but it's not just us; it's also the broader Dayton community and how we're all - the Marianist Family - is part of that, and that is part of us, too. It's that interlocking.

24:37 - Nancy Woeste

The one other beautiful part of that story is that Bruce went over to the donor's home.

23:43 – Meghann Naveau

Oh yes.

24:44 – Nancy Woeste

And they talked for hours about his project, the neighborhood, and what a beautiful connection to be able to just to have that experience of community, of relationship. And that's the other part that I think is so important about the Marianist Family is that it's about building relationships with people. And there are so many opportunities where you think, “Well, what good is it for me to just do a respite bag or to help it out at the Dakota Center for their Christmas party or to help out at Mission of Mary with some gardening?” But you don't know what connection, what door that's going to open.

25:31 - Mike Bennett

I think those stories you've highlighted demonstrate the relational dynamics, but also the ways you accompany people in their situations, the way you respond to different needs and scenarios. And I think what you're highlighting, Nancy, about... I would kind of frame it as utilizing the assets you have to respond to those needs, in a lot of sense, that's part of Chaminade's initial vision. You know, we talk about that concept of “a new fulcrum.” It can be understood as how do we leverage what we have, right? And I think you're also highlighting your experiences of

doing this within the Dayton Marianist Family Council and how you're doing this within the name of the Marianist Family. And I think it's just important to highlight how that Family Council is one entity within a larger body of the North American Family Council, which is an entity within the World Family Council. And so, I think sometimes these things can feel small, but you're doing it with an intentionality, with a mission and a connection to something greater in mind. All these stories, I think, have really highlighted a lot of the work you've been involved in with the temporalities committee through the Family Council. I'm curious how your experiences of being on the Family Council have impacted your own relationship with God?

27:03 - Meghann Naveau

I mentioned earlier coming to the Marianist Family was not what my plan was. And not for any reason, right? It just was not where I was at that point. But both becoming a parishioner at QAC and becoming part of the Family Council and the larger Marianist Family, I think, was a really soft landing place for me and where I was in my faith journey and in what I had experienced in the broader Church. And so, what we experience in the broader Church influences what we think of God and what our experience with God is. And I would certainly classify myself as someone who was wounded by the Church. After one particular incident, I went to an Episcopal Church the next weekend was just to like, "I don't [know], maybe this isn't me. Maybe this isn't it." And that didn't feel right either, so then we kept looking.

27:51 - Meghann Naveau

I was interacting with people who didn't want to think about the hard questions. Or if they did, it wasn't in a capacity of... "What we're saying as Church does not match my lived experience." And when I started saying versions of that at QAC and in Marianist circles, I heard a lot of "Me, too," or "I've been there." What I have found in every Marianist entity, community, Family that I have touched or been part of is that soft place to land, a space to authentically ask the hard questions that were a big part of why I was wounded in the broader Church. I continue to feel like I know God better. I know Jesus better. I know Mary better as part of the Marianist Family, because we can hold those hard questions. We can talk about theology and doctrine as rules, but to me, it falls really flat when it's so different from our shared lived experience. Because I feel like so many times in the broader Church, those things are very separate, or maybe it's not our lived experience, but it's the lived experience that someone else is trying to tell us that they're having, and we're not listening. And I think in the broader Marianist Family, what I have found time and time again is a willingness to listen and a willingness to dialogue and to think differently. That's kept me Catholic, honestly.

29:14 - Meghann Naveau

Being Marianist and knowing that our goal is really to love the people that we are with - You talked about accompaniment. That "accompaniment," to me, is such a Marianist verb. We talk a lot about community, but it really feels like that walking alongside, that journeying part that, in

my lived experience, the broader Church sometimes misses or isn't able to do in the way that a smaller subset, but a tighter-knit Marianist Family can.

29:44 - Nancy Woeste

For me it kind of helped me find a purpose. Because, you know, you raise three children, and then the last one graduates, and you go, “Hmm, what will I do now?” Because though I had part-time work that I did, I wasn't doing that when she graduated. And then, with Covid, everybody was isolated and [asking themselves] “What's my purpose?” And being a part of Family Council kind of helped solidify that for me in terms of “We're all missionaries.” We are all missionaries on a journey. And I went to serve meals in 2018 at Food for the Journey because I was, like “I just want a volunteer job where I can go in, I can do my job, and I leave, and I'm done.”

30:37 - Meghann Naveau

She says that's what she wants. But Nancy is not natured that way.

30:41 - Nancy Woeste

No, I'm not wired that way. Am I? And so, that's what I did. And I think it was a little bit of the experience of, “No. I think I'm going to stay.” And I keep returning to that Madonna Room where Food for the Journey first called to me and keep going back to this place [of] where can we help bring Jesus into the world like Mary did? How can we be that kind of missionary? Bringing the face of Jesus whether it's by connecting people or directly serving people, or asking people to say, “You know, I think you have a gift that you could share. Would you do that?” Which is kind of how Meghann got involved in this. And in some respects, I feel like my connection with the Marianist Family, and particularly being on the Family Council and working with these solidarity initiatives, it has helped me find my purpose but also helped me better understand what it looks like to bring Jesus into our world today the way Mary helped to bring Jesus to the world.

32:06 Meghann Naveau

With the QAC transition, we've talked a lot about “New times demand new methods.” That's another Father Chaminade quote that we've used a lot... We don't live our faith in the world that was 2000 years ago. We live it here and now, and we find the purpose in doing that here and now. And I think that's another really special part of the Marianist Family. But what is the real-world application of what we're hearing on Sunday or in our small communities? To me, it bridges that gap. But we need to live it now, in 2023, and that looks really different than five years ago or 10 years ago or 100 years ago.

32:45 - Nancy Woeste

Well, and you mentioned it looks different now than five years ago, so I'm going to circle back to five years ago. In 2018, we did this day of discernment. But that was five years ago. How do we

make sure that that's what we still want to make these things our focus? And so, what we are now embarking upon is more of discernment on a community basis. We want to be able to have discernment meetings with each of the Lay, SM, and FMI communities to ask people to step back and think, "Okay, what gifts and talents do I have that I can share with one of these three, or multiples of these three initiatives? What do we as a community want to do? But also, what do I, Nancy, want to do?" Because it might be the same and it might be different.

33:48 – Nancy Woeste

Our plan is to go to each one of the communities and have a meeting where we do some reflection and some discerning and have opportunities to have dialogue about what kinds of things we'd like to see as our individual community, and then time to think about what do I as an individual want to contribute? And get feedback from the communities as well. You know, if there's a community that's involved in something, that maybe that would be a great collaboration with one of these three initiatives. We want it to feel like a very intentional, thoughtful invitation to each community to participate alongside each other with the solidarity initiatives and to be missionaries together.

34:40 - Meghann Naveau

And one thing we feel really conscious about with this, too, is not just adding something to somebody's plate. I think we are very aware that, especially in different seasons of life, we all have a different capacity to serve in one way or the other. A community of people who don't have a bunch of young kids at home, maybe it is they all go every two weeks and volunteer at Mission of Mary and pull weeds or write "Thank you" notes. And maybe for those of us that have small kids, we're doing something once a quarter. Our goal with this is really the intentional community discernment. What we really want to do is help each other discern those gifts and say - I think there's something really powerful of "Nancy, you're really good at this." Hearing that in community that someone else recognizes the gift that I have to bring that maybe I don't see, or I'm just so used to living it, I'm not even aware that that is something.

35:30 - Mike Bennett

Before we hear Meghann and Nancy's responses to our concluding question, I'd like to offer a word of thanks to both of them for sharing their Marianist stories. I'd also like to offer a word of thanks to you, our listeners, for listening to this episode and for your engagement with the North American Center for Marianist Studies. Make sure to subscribe to *Sharing our Marianist Stories* wherever you listen to podcasts and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube @thisisNACMS. Now to wrap up this episode, we return with our final question. We know that the Marianist Founders corresponded via letter writing. So, in a similar fashion, if you were to write a letter to anyone, dead or alive, who would it be, and what would be the topic? You're also guaranteed a response from that person.

36:25 - Meghann Naveau

I feel like this is a cop-out answer, but maybe not. Just hear me out, Mike. Father Chaminade is who my answer to this question would be. I think that there is so much of what's going on in the Church now that feels really similar to what we hear from this time, and when the Marianists were being founded. You think about the Synod going on, and just even the polarization and the tension that we feel, even as Catholics. I want to believe that his response would be very validating in what we're doing because, to me, it feels so similar. I hope my kids someday are like, "Yeah, remember when we were doing that, and we were really little and going to all those meetings?"

37:02 - Meghann Naveau

I think there's something about this time period that we'll look back on as, "Yeah, that was when women became more widely accepted as participants in the broader Church. That was when our transgender siblings and our gay brothers and sisters, you know, were more widely accepted." I really hope, and I feel like we're in this kind of hallmark time that I think asking Father Chaminade, "Does it feel like this to you, too?" I think would just be, I hope, really validating and, if not at least, clarifying.

37:36 - Nancy Woeste

I think I would like to write to and hear from the Blessed Virgin Mary. I feel like this past summer, I had the opportunity to spend time in France, and we did a quick drive through Bordeaux. But also, we drove south to Lourdes. And being in that space where she appeared to Bernadette, not a day goes by where I don't think about what that experience for Bernadette might have been like, or just being in that space and feeling the strength of prayer in that space. But also, as a mother, one of my hopes was trying to role model the kind of love that Mary had, but also just wanting to ask, "How can I love the world the way you loved the world?"

38:39 - Meghann Naveau

And all the questions you could include. Oh my gosh, I would have so many questions! "Did Jesus sleep through the night?" Down to like, the very practical, I think that's becoming a mom and viewing Mary as a mom, I think it was a big shift for me. She had sleepless baby. She had heartburn when she was pregnant, probably.

39:01 - Nancy Woeste

But yeah, there are a lot of experiences in motherhood that you go "What would Mary do?" And I feel like maybe I should have asked that question even more when I was raising kids. But in the moment, you probably... But what would Mary do? And I guess also, in this phase of my life, now that my children are grown, you know, she had to let go. She had to *literally* not just let him go into his ministry but let him *go*. And she continued to love, and she continued to carry on his

mission. And when you stop and think about it, it puts you in such a place of awe of how she lived her life even after he died and continued it. Mary, she's a great gal!

39:51 - Meghann Naveau

There's your closing line. What a friend to have!

39:53 - Mike Bennett

She's a great gal.

40:00 - Meghann Naveau

Thanks for having us, Mike, this was really fun.

40:03 – Nancy Woeste

Yes, it was. Thanks, Mike.