

Sharing Our Marianist Stories, Episode 1 Transcript  
The First Lay Assembly with Marge Cavanaugh & Tony Garascia

(0:00) – Tony Garascia

We were kind of making everything up from scratch because we didn't know how to host a Continental Assembly. And another thing that I remember is that we didn't have a lot of seed money. She [Rita Bordano] would joke a little bit about going to jail because she had to put everything on her credit card, and she was wondering if she was going to go bankrupt.

(0:34) – Patti Gehred

Welcome to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*, a new podcast brought to you by the North American Center for Marianist Studies, otherwise known as NACMS. I'm Patti Gehred.

(0:44) – Gabby Bibeau

And I'm Sister Gabby Bibeau. So, Patti, can you tell us what today's episode is about?

(0:52) – Patti Gehred

Well, we're very excited to bring this conversation between Tony Garascia and Marge Cavanaugh, and they were two of the founding people of the very first Continental Assembly in 1988.

(1:07) – Gabby Bibeau

Yeah! So, we recorded this interview – I think it was you, Patti. You recorded this interview – of Tony and Marge during the Lay Assembly this past summer, July 2017 at UD (University of Dayton). I don't know if I'd ever met Marge or Tony, but I knew that they were longtime members of the Visitation State Marianist Lay Community. So, I was really glad that they offered to tell their story about being part of the first Lay Assembly that took place... 1988, right?

(1:42) – Patti Gehred

Yeah, 1988. It was 1986 that they started planning, in 1988 was the first Assembly, but then their conversation continues through the 1990s because so much growth and change happened during that decade.

(1:56) – Gabby Bibeau

Yeah, one of the things that I appreciated about their conversation was them explaining to us how there was this generation of lay leadership that was emerging in the 90s. And so, they created the Marianist Lay Network of North America [MLNNA], which is now called the Marianist Lay Community of North America [MLC-NA]. And that's the national governing body of Lay Marianists.

(2:22) – Patti Gehred

So, I was surprised by a lot of what they had to say, and I think it's good to know where we began.

(2:28) – Gabby Bibeau

I agree! So, we present this to you as our inaugural episode, and we hope that you enjoy.

(2:40) – Marge Cavanaugh

Hi! I'm Marge Cavanaugh, and I'm a longtime member – fifty-year member, celebrating fifty years as a member – of the Marianist Family.

(2:48) – Tony Garascia

[I'm] Tony Garascia, member of the Visitation State Community.

(2:53) – Marge Cavanaugh

You know, Tony, 1988 was a really important year. It was the very tough first time we had a Continental Assembly, a gathering of all the Lay Marianists in the United States. And actually, Canada was included too, I think. Anyway, I think you were involved in some of the preparations for that first meeting. So how did it start? How to get going?

(3:14) – Tony Garascia

So, back in 1985, we had the practice of gathering Marianist Lay Communities in the Cincinnati Province, and we had a meeting in the fall. And out of that meeting, there was a proposal to host a national meeting – or actually, a Continental Meeting – of Marianist Lay Communities. So, we came back after that meeting, and a letter went out to representatives all across Canada and the United States. And we proposed a meeting in Chicago in 2006, in January... Sorry, I'm sorry, 1986, in January of that year. And I think we probably had about thirty people show up from all across the United States and Canada, Lay and members of the Society of Mary [SM] and also the Daughters of Mary [FMI]. And we took a full weekend, did a long process, a lot of talking. And out of that meeting, the question emerged should we host a Continental Assembly? And there was an affirmation of that. So then, a planning committee was formed at that point. We had our first meeting, I think, later in that year in San Antonio, where we started kind of outlining everything, and then another meeting in St. Louis because we had decided that St. Louis was going to be the site of the first Continental Assembly in 1988. And you [Marge] were at that meeting as well. You came to that second planning meeting.

(4:55) – Marge Cavanaugh

Right, I remember coming to a meeting in St. Louis, which I think was in '86 at that point because and I think it was in the summer and it was rather it was, it was a little difficult I think for the people who were there coming from different expressions, or different kinds of expressions and different kinds of Lay communities to kind of think about what this meeting was going to be like and what the content was going to be. And one of the things we talked about, for instance, was how we were going to do prayer and whether, for example, if we should have Eucharist every day or not, how we should do that was that. Was that what people were used to or not? So, that's an example of the kind of thing that came up in part of the planning.

(5:49) – Tony Garascia

And another thing that I remember is that we didn't have a lot of seed money to put this thing on, and we were kind of making everything up from scratch because we didn't know how to host a Continental Assembly. And Rita Bordano was the treasurer, and from that time until actually it happened, she would joke a little bit about going to jail because she had to put everything on her credit card, and she was wondering if she was going to go bankrupt. And we actually pulled it off, and we had about a hundred and twenty to a hundred and thirty people show up for the first

Continental Assembly in July of 1988. And it was quite successful! And I can remember at the end of it, we had a business meeting and kind of an affirmation to host another one, which we did three years later. So, we had the second Continental Assembly in 1991 here at the University of Dayton. And that was very significant, I think, because there were members from Latin America and also, I think, Spain that were in touch with you, weren't they? And they were in attendance with an interpreter.

(7:07) – Marge Cavanaugh

There was a movement towards having an international meeting of lay people, and this apparently had been happening... discussed to some extent in Spain and in Chile, especially. And so, some of these folks from Chile and from Spain were interested in coming to our Assembly to kind of see what that was like, as they were thinking about doing an international meeting. And after our Assembly closed, there was a follow-up meeting on like the Sunday afternoon, that included the people from Spain and from Latin America.

(7:45) – Tony Garascia

Which then resulted in the first international meeting of Marianist Lay Communities in 1994? Or '3? 1993, okay. And so, the '91 meeting was very significant.

(8:02) – Gabby Bibeau

In this next section of the podcast, we'll hear Tony and Marge elaborate more about the lay leadership that they saw emerging at the '91 Assembly. Many of these lay leaders would go on to help develop the Marianist Lay Community of North America, as well as the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities [IO-MLC].

(8:22) – Patti Gehred

And in case you're a little bit confused, you will hear them mention the Marianist Lay Network of North America, and that organization has recently changed their name to the Marianist Lay Community of North America.

(8:37) – Gabby Bibeau

Yeah, that's good to know. It's easy to get confused. So, let's get back to the conversation.

(8:44) – Marge Cavanaugh

The other thing I was thinking was in '91, you could start to see a little bit of a trend that I can see at this [2017] Assembly, and that is the proportion of Marianist religious in attendance was starting, I think, to go down. Even then, you could start to see that it was shifting somewhat from the Marianist religious who had been leaders or had an interest in Lay communities, being sure that they came to this, to starting to see a little bit more of the lay leadership development. We had a discussion of what happens now. We had the meeting in '88. We were having the meeting in '91, and it was really at the end of that meeting that we said, "Okay, we are starting the the essentially... the Lay Network of North America." And we commissioned people to start an ongoing group that would plan an Assembly every three years. And Father Joe [Joseph] Stefanelli was one of the people who stood up at that discussion and was very encouraging of that. I remember. I remember him saying that, kind of challenging people to do that.

(9:58) – Tony Garascia

So, the '91 meeting really was very significant, I think. And I think the '91 meeting also planted the seeds for the beginning of the Marianist Family Councils, because I think there was some thought that there should be joint councils of all the branches. And by the year 2000, I think there was a World Marianist Family Council that was started by the Marianists [SM], the FMI, the Alliance Mariale, and also the Lay branch.

(10:30) – Marge Cavanaugh

Yeah, I agree. It was very significant, and I don't remember all the years now, but it is true that the International Family Council started in the late 90s, and also the North American Family Council started at around that same time. And so... the 90s were important I guess... It really was a time of, I guess, development. Kind of fast development when you think about it, where you begin to really see that the Lay branch starting to be able to do things beyond the local community, beyond the local scale, to be doing things that were affecting their organizing across the country and around the world and beginning to coordinate with the with the religious in that respect.

(11:22) – Tony Garascia

And just one other, I think, really important contribution that started in the early 90s and all the way up until the year 2000: I think it was really the ratification of the Statutes of the International Marianist Lay Community... In the year 2000, the Vatican gave official approbation as Marianist Lay Communities, as a juridical person in the church. And I think that was 2000, and you had a lot to do with that through the 90s, I think.

(11:55) – Marge Cavanaugh

Yes, and we did! We worked on that a lot. I mean, there were meetings, international meetings in which we worked on that... We actually met with the representatives from the Vatican, you know, at one of our meetings in Rome. So, that was... pretty exciting times. And it was kind of gratifying, actually... We just came from a session at this year's Assembly in which the speaker mentioned that we were a Pontifical Association of the Faithful, and that was something that was done at that time. It had a five-year probation period, and we had to go back and do a big report in 2005, and we passed. So, we made it through that. And I kept asking, I said, "Do we have to do reports every five years?" And they said, "No, no, once is enough. The 2000 thing and the 2005 thing, and you're good now." So, hopefully no more reports to the Vatican.

(12:55) – Patti Gehred

Even though Tony and Marge were done talking, I just had to jump in as long as I had them there and ask them what their hopes and dreams were for the future of the Marianist Family.

(13:07) – Marge Cavanaugh

You know, Tony and I have both been heads of the Lay Network in our history, and so I guess it isn't too surprising that on the sidelines at this meeting, we'd be talking exactly about the subject... What's the next step in the development of the Lay organization? And I think it does have to do with the Lay branch being able to stand on its feet more and more, not only within providing resources for formation. I think we're going to have to do more and more mentoring, and ourselves take more leadership along those lines. And I think it's going to be financial

responsibility as well. So, I think those would strengthen our participation in this effort and we need to work on those.

(14:01) – Patti Gehred

Thank you so much for listening to the inaugural episode of *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. We hope you enjoyed listening to this as much as Gabby and I enjoyed preparing it.

(14:12) – Gabby Bibeau

There are several people we'd like to thank, including Tony and Marge, of course, for being willing to share these important stories. And we also really need to thank Juliet Frumholt and the staff at WYSO. We could not have done this without their collaboration and support.

(14:28) – Patti Gehred

If you'd like to learn more about the MLC-NA, NACMS, or specifics about this particular podcast, please check out our web page at [www.nacms.org](http://www.nacms.org). That's [www.nacms.org](http://www.nacms.org), and click "Podcasts." And feel free to contact us if you have a Marianist story that you'd like to share.

End of Podcast