

Sharing Our Marianist Stories, Ep. 24 Transcript

Our Marianist Presence (with Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, Patti Gehred, and Gabby Bibeau)

00:00 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

If we put ourselves in the presence of God, something happens, even if we don't say anything. And that's the thing that Father Chaminade insisted also, no? Prayer is just entering consciously - being conscious of God with us, we with God, with Mary, Mary with us, and so on. And just that presence changes us.

00:41 - Patti Gehred

Welcome to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. I'm Patti Gehred.

00:45 - Gabby Bibeau

And I'm Gabby Bibeau.

00:47 - Patti Gehred

I'm very excited about today's podcast. We interviewed Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth about his very popular sentence of, "the quality of our presence is more important than our work." We often ask participants in our various programs to read a chapter in the *Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, written by Quentin Hakenewerth. In the beginning of Chapter 4, that's the first sentence. Have you heard comments about this line, Gabby?

01:20 - Gabby Bibeau

Yes. Well, listeners of our podcast might remember when we interviewed Rob Brodrick, a couple episodes ago or our last episode. And he brought up this quote, "the quality of our presence is more important than our work," and that has been for him a very big theme in his new role as the director of the Marianists Lay Community of North America [MLC-NA]. And it is a great line. It's a very challenging line. And so, I was really glad that he brought that up and that kind of gave us the idea to talk to Fr. Quentin about that idea specifically, but also about some other things too. But Patti, you were the one who interviewed him. so, what was that like, how did it feel, just what was your impression?

02:27 - Patti Gehred

I was very excited about interviewing Fr. Quentin about this line because Rob Brodrick is just one of many people, it seems to stop people in their tracks. Because, as Fr. Quentin says, "We're so much defined by what we do." But what he says is more important of who we are. And I just think because of how we are so ingrained to work hard, do more, go, and that makes you a better person to have to say, "The quality of our presence is more important than our work," I really do think it just makes people stop in their tracks. And I was wondering, too, what was the Marianists background behind that statement and like where he had come up with that. He was very excited to talk about it. He's a great person to interview. So, I really enjoyed his responses that you'll hear. What did he say that popped out to you, Gabby?

03:26 - Gabby Bibeau

I just appreciated some of his insights about presence. And I think for me, and I don't remember if he said this specifically, but just his reflections about presence made me think about how *Marian* that is. In the gospels, when Mary is mentioned, it's like all of the important events in the life of Jesus, Mary was there: the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus' birth, the Crucifixion, Pentecost, all of these key mysteries in the life of Christ, Mary was there, and she was present. And so, that's what I was reflecting on when he was talking about presence was how that's very appropriate for us as Marianists, because that is such a Marian thing.

04:35 - Patti Gehred

I would suggest to our listeners to listen to this more than once. On my way to work today I was listening to it in my car, and I listened to it three times, and each time there was something new. This is very profound. Again, he takes these ideas that seem small and simple, but they're not. The last part he talks about how being present unifies us, and that in community to be present to each other and like each other, that's what struck me. The last time I heard it is to like each other, to support each other, it's not just what a community does, but how they relate within that community. So, every time I listen to it, [a] whole new thought [comes]. And so, then I would start spinning on my new thought, maybe miss something. But I would suggest listening to this more than once. But we just really want to - we're happy that we get to share the gift of Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth with you today.

05:41 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

I'm Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth. I'm in Queretaro, Mexico. Let's just start with this... presence. Try to explain to somebody what presence is, and you say, "Well, you're there." But actually, presence is important because any living being, especially [a] person is self-diffusive. That means you communicate something by your existence. We say God is good and good is self-diffusive; what does that mean? It means that by his very nature He's radiating something, communicating, moving something outward to others. Well, presence just means being with someone in a way that makes a difference. That means that you're communicating something just by being. In fact, you really can't hide it if other people are somewhat conscious of it.

07:09 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

Now, if that's true, just think anytime we're present to one another, something is being communicated, and that's our nature also. Anytime we're conscious or present to anything, we either take it in or we keep it out. If I'm in the presence of someone and I like that person, I'm going to take something of that person into myself. Well, that means the presence of someone, first of all, [is] an influence. You influence one another. And what we communicate just depends on what we are. That's why it says, "The quality of your presence is more important than what you do." Actually, I think what we do follows much from what we are also.

08:27 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

So, presence is just being present to someone. If you are a good person, or if you're full of life you communicate that. Well, if you're selfish, if you're egoistic, you also communicate that. But it's something that wants to take, doesn't want to give. And so that's why the presence is important. In the original constitutions that Father Chaminade wrote - I guess, first for the Daughters of Mary [Immaculate] - but there's an article in there which deals with teaching the teacher. You walk into the room, a teacher is already communicating by his every look, gesture, and word. So, you can experience this... We don't do this much, but when you're in front of somebody, just look in that person's eyes. Just look in their eyes and then notice what happens inside of you. It's really interesting because something really happens, and that's why it's so intimate, it's so profound that very often we're not really conscious of all that.

10:12 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

Now I had this experience when I was studying - this is way back in the last century when I was studying at Loyola University in Chicago - Gabriel Marcel, who was a French philosopher, came and spoke in a hotel in Chicago, and I went to that lecture. Well, Gabriel Marcel... what's his philosophy? Well, it was personalism. He really centered on this whole idea of presence. And to tell you the truth, I can't remember a single thing that he said concretely. But I know that his philosophy was all centering on the presence of the person, the person. And the person by its nature offers a presence to others. It just makes us conscious of one another more and what we're communicating and what we're taking in. And that's life, you know, being conscious of that stuff.

11:48 - Patti Gehred

I'm wondering how you connect this to Marianist spirituality when we talk about Marianist spirituality. Part of it to me, is that we're not calling God into our presence when we pray. We're entering God's presence, and so that was a kind of a flip for me too, after reading your book.

12:07 Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

Yeah. Well, yeah. How does it connect? Well, first of all, we have to realize as far as vocabulary is concerned, this whole idea of presence as a philosophical system and so on, that didn't exist in Father Chaminade's time. He didn't have that vocabulary. But Father Chaminade, he lived it, and he taught it. In the book that we have on the Marianist origins [*Marianist Origins: an Anthology of Basic Documents for Formation in Marianist Identity*], these are basic documents, toward the end of that book, he has an article on prayer. And the title of the prayer is "Mental Prayer of Face and of the Presence of God." And then, when he starts the article, it says the prayer of the presence of God. Now the prayer of the presence of God, that just intrigued me. It's just 12 notes that he has on prayer, but it centers on the presence of God in what you said, "We put ourselves in the presence of God." If we put ourselves in the presence of God, something happens even if we don't say anything. And that's the thing that Father Chaminade insisted also, no? Prayer is just entering consciously, being conscious of God with us, we with God, with Mary, Mary with us and so on. And just that presence changes us gradually. It's just a continual process.

14:11 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

Yeah, I think in our world people talk about you, but more about what you do than anything else. And you get paid for what you do also. You don't get paid for what you are. And so, in prayer also, there's a temptation to think, "Well, I have to be active. I've got to be saying something," and so on. Well, if you read that article of Father Chaminade's on the presence of God, then you realize it's not saying things, it's not being active in that sense, but it's being conscious and that makes all the difference.

15:03 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

So connected with the Marianist spirituality, that was one of the things that woke me up somewhat to this also, that is prayer is consciousness. And so, when I go to prayer, if I examine my prayer and said, "Okay, of what was I conscious?" Well, I was conscious of what I have to do tomorrow. I was conscious what happened yesterday, and so on. Well, you can take that to prayer but that's not prayer.

15:36 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

So that's one connection. The other connection is that in Father Chaminade's system, which [is] much on community life. If you start examining community life, you say "What makes community?" Well, one thing is doing things together, but that's "the doing" again. What really makes a community is our being conscious of one another and liking one another. That's it. It's presence - presence. So, there's nothing in Father Chaminade, for example, just focusing on this "the idea of presence." But it's in almost everything he does... We talk about Marianist presence, what does that really mean? This means that to me, Marianist presence means there's someone present who is living these values that are Marianist, that come from our relationship with Mary and God.

17:10 - Patti Gehred

How do you feel this is a gift to the Church and a gift to the world? I think you've touched on that, that if we focus on that presence, we're conscious, it unites us.

17:26 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

Sure. Well, that's the gift. The gift to the world is simply that if presence is good, if the person is good - Now, basically you'd say, well, "What's goodness?" It's the three big qualities of God - truth, goodness, and beauty, and the sense of harmony and so on. Well, those are qualities that really bring us together and unite us. And you say, well, why is that important that we be united? Well, union is sharing things with one another. And so, the more we're united, the more we really live, we have more. In the world, actually, it's made to be that way.

18:29 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

The other day we had breakfast, and we were talking about how dependent we are of one another. And we just said, "Okay, this breakfast, how many people do we depend on just to eat breakfast? Where does the milk come from? Where does the eggs come from?" Well, we didn't do anything to make that happen. We do our part, but it's in a huge system of interdependence. A

Marianist presence unites. It just draws everything together. And it's a kind of a union. You don't lose anything when we do that - except your bad habits, if you're really honest. You don't lose anything, you gain something. You gain a lot because if there's this union, this presence, then anything you do is going to affect others, and what others do affects you. And if this is in a giving way, it's all for the good.

19:46 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

So, Marianist, but what's family spirit? Well, we just say a real Marianist presence just forms family. Well, that's it. This is the union with one another, and we recognize it so much as Marianists that we say, well, you know it's not just a union; it's family. We belong to one another. And so, if you see that on a world scale, it's a tremendous thing, it's tremendous.

20:27 - Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

So, the Marianist charism is something also we share it, we communicate it but really. The Holy Spirit's doing that, but it unites and when it unites, we just give more to one another. And that's very Marianist, but it's good for the world. And then, when you think of the world, you don't have to think of the whole global thing at one time. It's just where you are at NACMS in Dayton. But it doesn't have any frontiers. It means there's no limit to where it can go.

21:16 - Gabby Bibeau

Thank you for listening to this episode of *Sharing Our Marianist Stories* with Fr. Quentin Hakenewerth. We hope you enjoyed it. Before we end, we want to make sure that you know about the book that Fr. Quentin wrote that contains this quote, which is *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*. There's a link to that in the show's description. You can purchase that online from our NACMS bookstore at www.nacms.org. That's www.nacms.org. Thanks for listening.