

Sharing Our Marianist Stories, Episode 2 Transcript
“Following Mary’s Yes in the Inner City” with Beth & Mike Schultz

(0:00) – Mike Schultz

We always try to figure out, “How do we say yes?” Like Mary [and] Missionally speaking. What is she inspiring us to do? You don't need to save the world, just figure out how can you – in a small community of active citizens who want to make a difference – just start talking about it and get to the point where you take a risk?

(0:29) – 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.

(0:38) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

And I'm Sister Gabby Bibeau.

(0:41) – Patti Gehred

Gabby, can you tell me about this episode we're listening to today? Because I know you had listened to several interviews and this one really stuck out to you.

(0:50) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

So, the podcast episode today that we're sharing with you is an edited interview of Mike and Beth Schultz, who are two Lay Marianists that live in Dayton, and they made up part of the Nassau Community, which was an intentionally Marianist community that lived on the east side of Dayton. And they're known especially for beginning Mission of Mary Farm, which is now a nonprofit and has been very successful at providing vegetables and fresh food to people all over east Dayton, which is a food desert. So, I first met Mike and Beth Schultz when they were in the Nassau Community, and it was still in existence. And I remember going over to their house a couple of times, and that was when they just had one plot, one garden plot in their backyard. And they... would tell us, like, “We just did it. We saw a need, and we responded to it.” So, they cleared the land, and they just started this garden, and it's grown. I mean, they have acres of land now that's all urban, all over, different plots over the east side, and it's really has been amazing to me to see this grow.

(2:11) – Patti Gehred

And Juliet Fromholt from [Dayton’s] WYSO did this interview at an MLCNA [Marianist Lay Community of North America] Assembly gathering, so neither one of us had heard this interview. And so, when you suggested I listened to it, it sort of blew my socks off, actually. Because I've known Beth and Mike in a different context and watching them grow as a couple and get married and start a family as well as stay committed to this Mission of Mary has just been remarkable to watch. And their honesty during this interview, I found very moving.

(2:46) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

Yeah, so one of the things that we'll hear about in the first part of our episode is them talking about how they met at UD [University of Dayton] and how they started the Nassau Community, and then how that developed into the Farm over time. So have a listen!

(3:03) – Beth Schultz

Hi, I'm Beth Schultz.

(3:06) – Mike Schultz

Mike Schultz.

(3:08) – Beth Schultz

We both came to the University of Dayton, had different reasons of interest, but happened to run into each other. And we're both independently inspired, I think, by the Marianists and that sense of community and drawing in and being welcome.

(3:28) – Mike Schultz

So, we met here at University of Dayton in guitar class. Then we took a class through Father [Norbert] Burns, *Christian Marriage*. So, it's kind of like community, guitar – so, the music – and then this Father Norbert Burns kind of brought us together. You know, after graduating from UD, we joined a couple of folks in starting an intentional community, a live-in community that was Lay Marianists. But people definitely were inspired from the Marianists as a common ground, the Catholic Worker Movement, and just kind of taking what we learned here on campus of building community and urban social justice, and how do you take your youthful skills and energy into the actual city in neighborhoods in need? The Fitz Center [for Leadership in Community] here at UD helped intentionally place us in a neighborhood of need and just be present, build relationships with the people, the land, and then figure out through that presence in your community, what can you do?

(4:30) – Beth Schultz

I was just thinking as Mike was talking, Father “Teddy” [Joseph Patrick] Tedesco got a few of us in a car and drove us around the city of Dayton, going through a few different neighborhoods. And he just pointed out things that he knew about specific neighborhoods, and we started to get a little more acquainted with the city. I think a lot of times folks that come to study at the University of Dayton realize while you're in school there, it's wonderful and a beautiful sense of community, but you're also living in sort of a bubble. And so, it was neat as we were preparing to graduate kind of bursting out of that bubble and figuring out our new place in the city of Dayton as a whole.

(5:15) – Beth Schultz

So yeah, once we kind of figured out that we wanted to live in the east end of Dayton, we moved into that neighborhood just kind of trying to be open to possibilities. How can we use our gifts? How can we bring our passion where we are in our lives, into our new placement? How can we be a light to the world in that new setting? And so, first and foremost, it just meant getting to know our neighbors, getting to build those relationships. And it wasn't as easy as we thought. I think coming from the University of Dayton, where everybody wants to be friends and everybody wants to build community, it kind of was a struggle. You know, we'd invite neighbors over for meals and they'd be like, “Why do these college kids want to have meals with us? What's the ulterior motive here?” But yeah, really it was just how can we build relationships,

figure out what it is that the city of Dayton might need that we can offer with our gifts and talents?

(6:21) – Mike Schultz

And a couple of the common grounds, the mediums we found were useful in interacting, building relationships, was getting a dog. A lot of people like dogs, [but] not everyone. So, walking the dog, you start meeting people. Playing music. We live in a neighborhood that has a long – last couple of decades – long history of a lot of Appalachian folks who came to Dayton for different jobs. And so, you know, playing music was another one. And then also food. Not just growing the food, but you know, having a meal together. So, I think those are three common grounds we found to help build relationships with people who are very different from us or grew up in different settings.

(7:06) – Mike Schultz

So that community, we lived in it for eight years, and it had over 20 folks who lived in it anywhere from six months to I guess the full eight years. And one of the things it birthed – we always try to figure out, “How do we say yes, like Mary, to needs of the world?” – was Urban Farm and Mission of Mary Cooperative, which is now nonprofit in the inner city. We run an urban farm and do education with youth, high school folks. And so, we’re kind of dealing with the food access, food deserts of the inner city, and also realize there’s a lot of education. And so, it’s the baby we created and we keep nurturing that baby.

(7:50) – Patti Gehred

In this next part, Mike and Beth share some of the other ways they tried to listen to Mary’s “yes,” which I found really interesting to listen to, because they just have this hope that just underpins everything they do.

(8:06) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

So, a couple of things you’ll hear: Mike will talk about one of the things that they tried was sheltering two homeless people in their community, and some of the lessons they learned from that. And then after being asked by Juliet Fromholt from WYSO about some of the difficulties of following Mary’s “yes,” Beth will share a story of driving down the street in her neighborhood and seeing somebody overdosing and just dealing with the horror of that.

(8:40) – Beth Schultz

We really tried to come from a place of not knowing, of just being open to the Spirit, being open to what “yes” meant for us. You know, sometimes, you say “yes,” thinking that you know what it’s going to be or what it’s going to mean or look like, and it turns into something different. And it’s being open to the movement of that, the Spirit in that.

(9:11) – Mike Schultz

So, just quickly, one of the first “yes’s” as a community we said yes to is two homeless fellows, Sam and Cameron, who used to live on this back acre. They called it the “cool pool.” It used to be a neighborhood pool that they filled in where we started the Urban Farm. We eventually invited them into our house. It was a struggle to come to that decision to do that, and we did that for about just under two years. And they were both alcoholics, a lot of emotional issues. They

were collecting cans, didn't have a sense of dignity. Luckily, over time, they were part of a community. They had some dignity. One found his own job and his own place. And it's great story, [but] we learned that's not what we want to do the rest of our life. We didn't have the skill set or the real resources and energy to make that our lifelong project.

(9:58) – Juliet Fromholt

Is it hard sometimes? You know, east Dayton is a community that has – there are a lot of things happening in it economically. You know, that neighborhood in particular, like much of the Miami Valley now, is being hit hard by the opioid crisis. We're seeing food deserts around our city. Is it hard sometimes to say “yes,” to have that *yes* moment, to be like Mary and say “yes” when you're facing a neighborhood that has not just one problem to be worked toward a solution, but many issues that are intertwining.

(10:39) – Mike Schultz

Recently... Beth, you might want to share a story about, you know, seeing someone die just the street down from [us].

(10:45) – Beth Schultz

Yeah, as you were asking that question, I was thinking about just earlier this week, actually. I was driving home, and I was driving down the street that we live on with my little 6-month-old sitting in the back of the car. And I see this man passed out on the sidewalk. You know, he was surrounded by a bunch of people. And I could tell like, obviously, they were frantic because he needed help, but they were calling, and help was coming. So, it was the struggle inside me of like, “I want to – is there anything that I can do? Is there a way that I can respond?” But at the same time, just feeling a bit of despair. You know, having my small child in the back of the car and not wanting her to be exposed to this kind of thing at such a young age. So, you know my response was, “Okay, it looks like everything that can be done right now is being done. So, I'll just go home and pray.” And at first, I just wanted to feel that despair? But then my response ultimately was to say, “I can continue to be a light of hope in this dark place.”

(12:09) – Juliet Fromholt

How does Mary help you through experiences like that? And how do you look to her when you're encountering something like that?

(12:18) – Beth Schultz

That's a great question too. I think ultimately, for me especially where I am right now, looking to Mary as a model of being that mother. And she *endured* ultimately like the largest pain... that we can possibly experience in watching her own child suffer. So, thinking about the way that she could handle that with such grace is really inspiring.

(12:56) – Patti Gehred

In this next part, Mike talks about how he was told by a Marianist Brother that Jesus is at work in the world, to trust that. And so, it's up to us to just find out what our small role is.

(13:09) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

Yeah, I think that was brother Tom Pieper, who I know has been an important mentor for Mike and for Beth in this process. So, this last part of their interviews will just be them sharing on some of their lessons and their hopes, as well as some interesting ways that they collaborated with some of the vowed members of the Marianist Family, like Brother Tom Pieper.

(13:35) – Beth Schultz

For us, as we were starting our Community, we were constantly trying not to reinvent the wheel, while at the same time, obviously, we're experiencing something a little bit different than anybody else has ever done or experienced before. But things that we relied on a lot were looking to the Society of Mary, as well as the Daughters [of Mary Immaculate], and just seeing how our experience could relate to theirs and learning from them. We wrote our own *Rule of Life*, but drew upon those resources that we already had. You know, looking to NACMS for resources. I think if we can continue to build a movement that's really based on drawing upon the strong resources that are already there, while also utilizing the passion that's developing and that has been developing, putting those two pieces together, and just continuing as we were just talking in this keynote about taking the interior strength of prayer and all that [and] moving it into action. I think as long as the Marianists as a whole are able to act upon their love and their passions, I think together we will be a strong force, a strong movement.

(15:05) – Mike Schultz

You know, to be an active listener is important. There's two different kinds of listening: One where in your neighborhood or the city, you could hear a gunshot or you can hear domestic violence, or you could just hear someone tell their story, how they grow up. And you can let it go out the other ear or truly listen to the point where you're reflecting on it and trying to really understand it. Even so much so that you're opening your heart to pain or what they're feeling or what they went through. And then through that, hopefully, the Marianists can figure out, “Well, what am I supposed to do?”

(15:39) – Mike Schultz

I once heard it said [by] Brother Tom Pieper, “You know, Jesus already saved the world. You don't need to save the world. Just figure out how can you in a small community of active citizens who want to make a difference just start talking about it and get to the point where you take a risk?” So, I think that's a big challenge because listening is hard in itself. But then to get the courage and risk to do something about it. So, [I'm] excited to just see how other Lay Marianists – and other just Christians or goodwilled citizens here in Dayton in our situation – will be able to do that moving forward.

(16:24) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

Thank you for listening to *Sharing Our Marianists Stories*, a podcasts through the North American Center for Marianist Studies. There are several people we'd like to thank, including Beth and Mike Schultz for being so willing to share these heartfelt and honest stories with us. And of course, we want to thank Juliet Fromholt and the staff at WYSO for all of their support in this podcasting endeavor.

(16:48) – Patti Gehred

If you want more information about the Mission of Mary Cooperative, NACMS, and specifics about this podcast, please visit our website at www.nacms.org. That's www.nacms.org. Thank you for listening.

(17:10) – Gabby Bibeau, FMI

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