

## **Addendum to The Five Silences, Missionary Discipleship**

### **And the Marianist Art of Accompaniment**

At the end of my paper I suggested connecting the System of Virtues to the Church's liturgical year. I suggested the preparation virtues tie in to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, principally the Period of Inquiry and First Conversion leading into the Catechumenate. The purification virtues correspond to the Period of Preparation in the RCIA, which is really the season of Lent. The consummation virtues correspond to the Period of Mystagogy—the final period in the RCIA that talks about the “education in the mysteries.”

On further reflection, each of the Virtues could be developed in a “*Lectio Divina*” method, which is a method going back to the early Church where a person reflected on the continuous unfolding of scriptures as presented in the Lectionary. *Lectio Divina* is a more or less continuous reading of the scriptures that was roughly incorporated into the Jewish cycle of readings and then into the Lectionary as the Canon of Scriptures came into focus in the second century BCE.

The question of making the System of Virtues more a part of Marianist formation has been raised over and over. A simple and practical way of making the Virtues more a part of the Marianist in formation is to make it part of the Church's Liturgical prayer.

The early Church had a saying that is still used today: “*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*,” which roughly translates to “the law of prayer leads to the law of belief.” Another way of saying this is, “the way of prayer leads to the way of belief.” Prayer is a principal means to shape belief and behavior. The Church prayed for centuries that Mary was the mother of God, then it eventually was defined that way. This also occurred with the Immaculate Conception. The way we pray shapes how we believe and act.

Thus, if the Marianist Family wants the System of Virtues to be more assessable to the Marianist in formation, why not adapt the individual virtues in a *Lectio Divina* format to the daily readings of the Church. There could be a method that emphasizes the preparatory virtues roughly during Ordinary Time, but following the flow of the RCIA; the purification virtues

would correspond to Lent; and the consummation virtues would align with the season of Easter, which involves the period of Mystagogical Catechesis.

While it is dangerous to ask whether Blessed Chaminade would have embraced the Church's liturgical year, and perhaps adapted his method of formation around the cycle of readings, one has to ask: why wouldn't he? Chaminade anticipated many of the movements that found themselves solidified in the Second Vatican Council. The French School of Spirituality, to which he belonged, most probably influenced the French liturgical reformers of the twentieth century. One could argue that next to the other three constitutions of Vatican II, the very first Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy paved the way to the spirit and foundation of Christianity in the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

I will leave it to the Marianist scholars who know Chaminade intimately through his writings to reject the notion of tying the System of Virtues to the liturgical cycle of the Church. It seems like it might be a worthy proposal to consider. If you believe that the way you pray is the way you believe and act, then perhaps Marianists in the future will pray, believe, and act out of the Virtues as part of their baptismal commitment. It is worth a thought.

What follows is a sample of how the preparation virtues could be adapted to the liturgical cycle. This proposal will either live or die on the affirmation or neglect of those who read it. In other words, if it is meant to be, it will be developed and perhaps be utilized; if not, it will be assigned to the pile of other curious proposals and efforts to make the System of Virtues more relevant.

### ***Lectio Divina* Based on the Marianist Preparatory Virtues**

1. I Encounter the scripture: I read a suggested scripture.
2. I move further into silence. I ask the Spirit to move me into stillness and silence. I ask the Spirit to guide me in stillness and prayer.

I scan my...

- Body and the messages and signs it is giving me...
- Mind and senses, asking the Spirit to quiet my planning, thinking, etc.

- Passions and feelings, noting any passions and feelings that are the last to quiet
- Inner words and dialog, asking the Spirit to pause my inner tapes and schemas
- Active imaginations about my future or imaginative regrets about my past, and even valid concerns for people I know or issues that occupy my attention.

I note to myself if there is anything that my senses are asking me to discuss later in times of direction and counsel. Sometimes my senses are like a crying child who asks for contact and loving attention. Are there any that are asking for mine in this moment?

I note to myself if there is anything in particular that the Spirit is calling me to deal with or let go: fear, regret, frustration, anger, anxiety, depression, anything that is preventing me from living fully as a child of God, a child of Mary. These cries from my inner being sometimes block the voice of God and prevent me from fully being in God's presence. I pay attention to any of these things I want to deal with further and note them for possible consultation with others.

3. I continue to center in quietness through paying attention to my breathing. I select a state I want to let go of from what I have noted above, and I choose a quality of Mary I want to further embody: humility, peace, joy, gentleness, love, zeal, or a state that is suggested by the reading I have just read.

*Breathing in, I breathe in...* (name the quality you seek to embody as you inhale)

*Breathing out I breathe out...* (name the state you want to let go: anger, frustration, etc., as you exhale). Repeat this exercise for a minute. If distracted you can come back to it.

4. I prayerfully reread the scripture passage, focusing on the themes of the mystery presented as they pertain to my life.
5. After suitable reflection on the scripture and mystery I ask myself...
  - a. Are there any themes, directions, concerns that God is calling me to pay more attention to in the days ahead? (Preparatory obedience)
  - b. What issues, themes, directions, worries, or feelings do I need further counsel about? Am I called to bring them to the attention of a spiritual director or my community for further guidance and clarification? (Recollection)

- c. How have I changed as a result of my saying “yes” to God’s call? Am I called to further change in the way I live and respond to the needs of others? How have I changed and what is the quality of the change? Can I name this change and bring it to my spiritual director or community? (Recollection, support for mortifications)