

Marianist Mindfulness: A Guided Retreat

**Guided Retreat Prepared by Mike Bennett
Product of MSP 2.0, 2018**

Introduction to Retreat and Concept of Marianist Mindfulness

- Context of the Founders
 - These preparatory virtues and their exercises served as a foundation that helped them in their missionary work.
- Part of a whole
 - “Silences” as exercises that help shape only a portion of the preparation virtues which serve as the foundation for our spiritual lives as Marianists
 - Importance of the dynamic of both being gathered and sent in our Marianist tradition, the silences encourage us to do both—to engage in inward reflection and to engage with others, especially those who are poor and marginalized
 - In the context of this retreat experience you’re invited to turn inward, to reflection on your relationship with yourself, with God, and with others so that you might establish or nourish a foundation that allows us to continue to turn inward, but to engage others as we go about our day and move beyond this retreat experience
 - “Essential is the interior”
 - Use Luke 6 for scriptural reflection
 - Luke 6:46-48: The Two Foundations
“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I tell you? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.”
 - These exercises help us form the foundational virtues of knowing ourselves and God and developing the discipline and self-mastery necessary to follow Jesus.
 - “These virtues give us a beginning likeness to Jesus in the depths of our personality, and they form the basis for his influence through our presence and work.”

- “I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” (Mt 10:16)
 - “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” (Jn 10:14)
 - “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (Jn 17:3)
 - “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” (Jn 15:20-21)
 - “I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.” (Jn 16:1-3)
 - “Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, ‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ Another of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” (Mt 8:18-22)
 - “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (Mt 10: 37-39)
- These exercises are meant to take dynamics of our external and internal natures that may seem involuntary and create a sense of mindfulness about them, so that we may begin to control them so they become voluntary and are used in ways that are faithful to our role as disciples and as a portion of God’s creation.

- How we think about the “silences”
 - Sometimes the language and literature around these exercises can sound negative, so I invite you to think about the silences as more than just a call to squelch or suppress certain dynamics of our lives. Rather, I invite you to think about these concepts in regards to a sense of mindfulness—how might you pay attention to this dynamics of our being and living so that you may grow in intentionality; perhaps this might be a call to discern how you might use these God-given gifts so we may see with the eyes of Christ and be Christ for others.
 - An invitation to live in the present, to overcome the anxiety of the future
 - “If your anchor is not centered in today, then you’ll blink and miss the delight of this very moment, which is always with us and is the perfect teacher.”¹
 - “Paradise is not a place that awaits our arrival but a present we arrive at. A place, in fact, we are already in. When we expect that moment, we grow more confident that we will be ‘taken on a ride’ to see it. How many chances a day are we given to recognize this—an opportunity to practice sacred presence? Smack dab, right in front of our eyes. We miss so much ‘now’ because we are rushing to ‘next.’”²
- Invitation to embrace silence of retreat and this structure

¹ Gregory Boyle, *Barking at the Choir: The Power of Radical Kinship* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 74.

² Boyle, *Barking at the Choir*, 75.

Retreat Schedule

Day 1 (Sunday, January 6, 2019)

- 3:00 Welcome to Governor's Island
Overview of Retreat Schedule
Introductions of each other
- 3:30 Introduction to Marianist Mindfulness
Break
- 4:15 Group Meeting with Assigned Spiritual Guides
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:00 Discussion on Specific Mindfulness Concept
- 7:30 Evening Prayer
- 8:00 Leisure Time

Day 2-5 (Monday, January 7, 2019-Thursday, January 10, 2019)

- 8:00 Morning Prayer
Silence begins after Morning Prayer
- 8:30 Breakfast
Individual Meetings with Spiritual Guides
- 12:30 Lunch
- 3:00 Three O'clock Prayer
Group Processing (breaks silence)
Discussion on Specific Mindfulness Concept
- 4:45 Optional Mass
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:00 Evening Prayer
- 7:45 Leisure Time

Day 6 (Friday, January 11, 2019)

- 8:00 Morning Prayer
Silence begins after Morning Prayer
- 8:30 Breakfast
Individual Meetings with Spiritual Guides
- 12:30 Lunch (break silence)
- 1:30 Pack-Up, Load-Up, Clean-Up
- 2:30 Sending Forth
- 3:15 Hit the Road

The Three O'clock Prayer

Lord Jesus,
We gather in spirit at the foot of the Cross
With your Mother
And the disciple whom you loved.
We ask your pardon for our sins
Which are the cause of your death.
We thank you for remembering us
In that hour of salvation
And for giving us Mary as our Mother
Holy Virgin, take us under your protection
And open us to the action of the Holy Spirit.

Saint John, obtain for us the grace
Of taking Mary into our lives as you did,
And of assisting her in her mission.

May the Father and the Son and the Holy
Spirit be glorified in all places through
The Immaculate Virgin Mary. Amen.

Day One: Mindfulness of Noise and Voice

Morning Prayer

Content

- Talk like Jesus
- “We become conscious of our words in order to speak deliberately and purposefully for the good of our listeners. Words reveal and communicate. Even ordinary words have great power. Words can enlighten, inspire, and encourage. They can heal and console. Words born in communion with Christ or Mary are carriers of life. Of course, our words—when they come from egoism—can also do the opposite. We silence the words coming from the interests of our egoism. Like Jesus, we want to speak words born of attentive listening and understanding.”³
- “Silence of words means to work at the control of the tongue so that good habits of speech are established: speaking at the right time and in the right place and in the proper manner; speaking justly and charitably; never offending in word; always inspiring, helping, and influencing to good...”
- Scripture:
 - Ephesians 4:29
 - Colossians 4:5-6
 - James 1:19
- How do we find and embrace a sense of “silence” amidst all the noise?
 - Use Laird’s chapter on “The Open Porches of the Mind”
- How do we find our voice within the Marianist charism? How does the Marianist charism and your experience(s) of it help you find your voice?
 - Use Silf’s excerpt on “unplanned gift”

³ Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 2000), 43-44.

Day Two: Mindfulness of Encounter

Morning Prayer

Content

- “We communicate much more by nonverbals than we do by words. The look in our eyes, the expression on our face, the movement of our head, the stance of our posture, and the style of our dress (as well as thousands of other signs) tell others what we mean to them and they to us. Our very presence “speaks.” So we give close attention to what we are communicating by our facial expressions, gestures, dress, manners, etc. Are they coming from our old self-image or from our new image in Christ? We want all our expressions to benefit the Lord and the Queen we serve.”⁴
- “Our exterior habits and manners reveal interior feelings, emotions, thoughts, and desires—they are the index of character and personality.”
- Scripture:
 - Matthew 5:14-16
- Seeing with the eyes of Christ
 - Use DeLorenzo’s portrayal of the works of mercy as a way of engaging with poor and marginalized so we might see with the eyes of Christ rather than our own
 - “[Dorothy Day] knew that the malaise of indifference—that sluggishness of heart, that dullness of vision—seeps in whenever we become content with our own happiness alone and relax our concern for others.”
 - “Treat the sufferings of others as your own suffering, make their happiness your happiness, practicing relocating your center of gravity in their direction.... If we are opposed to learning how to love those whom Jesus loves then we will never be able to love heaven, where his way, his truth, and his life are everything.”
 - “Vocational discernment is not possible without the Works of Mercy. The Works of Mercy train us to habitually take the needs, sufferings, and joys of others as a primary concern. If not for this regular training through these specific exercises, then the comfort of our own preferences, our own self-interest, and our own way of seeing things warps our vision and weakens our hearts.... The Works of Mercy teach us how to see things as

⁴ Hakenewerth, *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, 44.

God sees them, and vocational discernment relies greatly on the way we see things.”

- “True vocational discernment requires the Works of Mercy because God’s call is never for private happiness; God’s call is always about the freedom and bravery to act on behalf of the good of others with the love of Christ.”
 - Similarly, Marianist mindfulness provides us a way to look at ourselves with the eyes of Christ in addition to the works of mercy.
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- What does the phrase “meaningful gesture” mean to you? How might you embrace these (i.e., face-to-face encounter, Pope Francis’ thought of “smelling like the sheep”)?

Day Three: Mindfulness of Calm and Stillness

Morning Prayer

Content

- “That which goes into our mind become a part of us. We live and act according to what we know. If we fill our mind with mush, we become milksops. Our aim is to take on the mind of Christ. So we fill our mind with what is good or useful in view of our calling. We put out of our mind what serves only the demands of our ego or sensuality.”⁵
- Scripture:
 - Ephesians 4:23
 - Philippians 2:5
 - Colossians 3:16
- Use Brené Brown’s chapter on “Cultivating Calm and Stillness: Letting Go of Anxiety as a Lifestyle.”
- How does this exercise help you understand patterns of thought and critical analysis? How might embracing mindfulness of mind help you to transmit and transform the Marianist charism and the Catholic Church?
- Think like Jesus.

⁵ Hakenewerth, *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, 44.

Day Four: Mindfulness of Creativity

Morning Prayer

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- “Images usually move us more than ideas. Our imagination gives us images of what is or of what could be. The exercise of silence of the imagination cultivates and disciplines our fantasy to serve our call. For example, images of living the virtues of Jesus in serving our neighbor can move us powerfully toward good. On the other hand, we silence those images which contradict our life in Christ, such as committing adultery in our heart. A poorly disciplined imagination leads us into many false ways. A well-cultivated and finely disciplined imagination becomes a creative force in following Jesus.”⁶
- Scripture:
 - Matthew 5:28
 - Colossians 2:3
- Use “Cultivating Creativity” from Brené Brown’s *The Gifts of Imperfection*
- How do we harness our imagination for good? How do we cultivate an ability to dream and to respond to the needs of others in a way that engages our faith, social justice, and our Marianist charism?

⁶ Hakenewerth, *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, 45.

Day Five: Mindfulness of Pondering

Morning Prayer

Content

- “‘Passions’ are the desires or feelings that move us to act in a certain way. Practically all of our actions are moved by some feeling. If we want to understand our actions, we must discover to what or to whom our feelings are attached. The more our feelings are attached to something, the more they push us toward it. Are we attached more to our old self or to our life in Christ? Silence of the passions is the exercise of denying our self-indulgent feelings and of becoming passionate in Christ for what is good.”⁷
- Act like Jesus
- Scripture:
 - Matthew 22:37-39
- How do we channel our emotions, our feelings, our passions so we might act like Jesus?
- Using Rolheiser’s reflections on Mary and pondering at the shepherds’ visit to the nativity, how do we use our passions to share Christ with others?
 - “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries,” but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.” If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: “We have found the Messiah!” (Jn 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him “because of the woman’s testimony” (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, “immediately proclaimed Jesus” (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for?

Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We want to have better training, a deepening love, and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us. But this does not mean that we should postpone the evangelizing mission; rather, each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord, who despite our

⁷ Hakenewerth, *A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*, 45.

imperfections offers us his closeness, his word, and his strength and gives meaning to our lives. In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him; what you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others. Our falling short of perfection should be no excuse; on the contrary, mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mired in mediocrity but to continue growing. The witness of faith that each Christian is called to offer leads us to say with Saint Paul: “Not that I have already obtained this, or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil 3:12-13).

Day Six: Becoming the Brook

Morning Prayer

Sending Forth

“I am like a brook that makes no effort to overcome obstacles in its way. All the obstacles can do is hold me up for a while, as a brook is held up; but during that time it grows broader and deeper and after a while it overflows the obstruction and flows along again. This is how I am going to work.”

- Are the obstacles something others put in our way? Or are they merely a result of the path we have chosen? Water flows downhill in what initially seems to be the path of least resistance (call), but it hits obstacles along the way that are merely a dynamic of call, not a sign you've chosen incorrectly.
- How can our actions, our service, our presence, our vocation be a demonstration of the brook overflowing? How are they a result of the foundation these exercises build?
- Recall Martin Laird's reflections on maintaining “silence” amidst the noise?

Words of Gratitude

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