

Responding to Uncertainty: A Marianist Guide to Faith, Love, and Hope

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The Marianist tradition was forged not in a time of peace, but in the crucible of the French Revolution—an era defined by violent conflict, social upheaval, and the collapse of institutional structures. Today, as we face modern global conflicts, social polarization, and economic instability, the lives of the Marianist founders provide a “DNA” for responding to crisis with resilience. Building on Gabrielle Bibeau’s 2020 paper, *Living in a Time of Crisis: It’s in Our Marianist DNA*, this reflection explores how core Marianist virtues—faith, hope, and love—provide essential guidance for navigating uncertainty. It urges us to actively embody the Marianist charism not only to survive but also to thrive and serve in a complex world.

Faith: Finding Stability in Chaos

For Blessed William Joseph Chaminade (Founder of the Marianist Family), faith was a lived response to instability. While in exile and facing the threat of death, he believed a faithful soul must remain calm, trusting that “all things work together unto good for those who love God.”¹

Practical Ways to Practice Faith Every Day

- **Create Home Sacred Spaces:** When churches were closed during the Revolution, faith survived in homes. We can set aside a small space for prayer or reflection to stay grounded when the outside world feels chaotic.
- **Practice Calm Sustenance:** Instead of stressing, seeking total control over world events, we should focus on active trust in God. This means performing daily duties with the conviction that God is still at work within history, even when it is not immediately visible.
- **Small Group Prayer:** Chaminade’s first act upon returning from exile was organizing Sodalties, faith communities at the local level. Gathering with friends or neighbors to pray or discuss spiritual life nurtures the fire of faith when larger institutions struggle. Coming together and praying as a community creates a sense of strength of faith.

Love: Leading Through Relationship

Marie Thérèse de Lamourous (an early and influential lay Marianist) demonstrated that love is expressed through taking responsibility for one’s community. When priests were forced into hiding, she became a spiritual guide,

¹ Chaminade, *Letters*, no. 10 to de Lamourous, Sept. 15, 1797; vol. 1, pt. 1.

connecting people and sustaining the life of the Church in the hearts of the people.

Practical Ways to Practice Love Every Day

- **Collaborative Leadership:** Recognize that we each have a role in the mission, regardless of any formal title. In our workplace or neighborhood, we can look for ways to lead through relationship and collaboration rather than individual authority.
- **Connecting Others:** Just as Marie Thérèse connected Catholics to the sacraments, we can act as a bridge—connecting those in need with resources or simply providing a listening ear to those feeling isolated by current events.
- **Sacrificial Service:** Love in the Marianist sense is *sacrificial*. Small acts of daily service—helping a neighbor, volunteering, or promoting justice—witness to a mission carried forward through community action.

Hope: Choosing Resilience Over Despair

Blessed Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon (Founder of the Marianist Sisters, along with Chaminade) faced a life of exile and a community ravaged by disease. Her hope was not naive optimism but a conscious decision to trust in God’s work, despite suffering.

Practical Ways of Being About Hope Every Day

- **Acknowledging the Struggle:** Adèle was honest about her “moments of discouragement” and tears. Practicing hope starts with being honest about your fears and asking others for inner strength and prayer.
- **Continuing the Mission from Where We Are:** Even when bedridden by illness, Adèle wrote letters to encourage her sisters. We can share hope through simple gestures—a text of encouragement, a handwritten note, or sharing a positive story—showing that “God’s work continues even in the midst of suffering.”
- **Forming Communities of Meaning:** In a culture of division, make a deliberate choice to build spaces of belonging. Whether in a school, office, or home, intentionally creating an environment of resilience and purpose helps others navigate the present with courage.

The Marianist Challenge Today

Moments of crisis inevitably change us. The Founders themselves were shaped by the turmoil of their time, and their response gave birth to a spiritual tradition that continues today. The same invitation stands before us.

To be Marianist in the contemporary world means embracing several commitments:

Building Communities of Faith: Just as early contemporaries of Father Chaminade, Adèle, and Marie Thérèse gathered in homes during persecution, Marianists today are called to create spaces of belonging and spiritual growth. These spaces can exist in schools, offices, community rooms, and homes.

Empowering and Encouraging Collaborative Leadership: The mission flourishes when everyone recognizes their responsibility in shaping communities of faith and service. Everyone has a God-given gift to share, and as individuals, when we share those gifts, the community is stronger.

Forming People of Hope: In a culture often marked by division and discouragement, Marianists are called to nurture resilience that is rooted in faith.

Living the Mission Publicly: Marianist spirituality calls believers to witness through action—serving others, promoting justice, and embodying compassion.

A Marianist Future

Every generation must rediscover what it means to live the charism faithfully. Being Marianist reminds us that faith, hope, and love are not simply virtues of the past; they are resources for navigating the present. The Founders lived through revolution, exile, illness, and uncertainty. Yet, their response was not to retreat but to engage and to activate mission creatively. The same spirit continues to guide Marianists today.

To be Marianist today calls us to trust that God is still at work, to build communities that nurture faith, and to live with the courage to hope. Thus, Marianists do not simply endure times of crisis: they help transform them.

Reference

Gabrielle Bibeau, *Living in a Time of Crisis: It's in Our Marianist DNA* (Dayton, OH: NACMS, 2020).