

# **Reports of the International Team of the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities**

## **President's Report**

**Isabella Moyer**

Isabella Moyer began her report acknowledging that of the challenges from Nairobi some are completed, some in progress and some not yet begun.

Isabella drew attention to the fact that the IO-MLC Leadership Team is unique within the Marianist Family. The General Administration of the other branches is formed around the three offices. Our team is formed based on geographic representation. However, because of the wisdom of the three offices structure, the team divides tasks accordingly, with two people serving in each of the offices in addition to their own assignments.

In addition to family, career, community, church work, volunteer work, team members do several things to fulfill their obligation:

- 1) Individual responsibilities that come with their role on the team
- 2) Tasks of the IO- MLC (future challenges, finances, communication, assembly, etc.)
- 3) Tasks and projects of the World Council of the Marianist Family

Ideally, international committees would be assembled to work together on the challenges (social justice, formation, and youth). However, as tasks grew and unexpected challenges developed, some challenges were set aside.

The work of the IO-MLC is large. It is imperative that we form committees to help the work of the international team. The work must be a collaborative effort not reliant upon a handful of people.

Those of us here have a privileged understanding of the international organization. Growth and success depends on all of us. Many hands are needed in the next four years. Isabella challenged us not to wait to be asked but to step forward. However, if asked, respond with a generous yes! One reason to involve others in our regional and international work is to groom leaders.

As an international organization, our regional work depends on regular communication with National Responsibles. It is here where we learn of gifts and joys of Marianist life around the world.

### **Communication**

It is the responsibility of the international team to maintain a list of all national responsibles and their communities. A challenge is that leaders and contact information are constantly changing. Isabella thanked Susan Vogt for her efforts at maintaining the IO-MLC Directory. Numbers are important for general information but also for determining the number of delegates for each country/region. Therefore, we need to know who we are, where we are and how many we are. IO-MLC website serves as a portal to MLC websites around the world. Documents are also available there. Some are available in languages other than Spanish, French and English. We are grateful to the many people who translate for us! The newest page is our prayer site with prayers

from all over the world. We hope that this resource will continue to grow and be a resource for all MLCs.

New Newsletter – The International Team receives newsletters from around the world. To make those available to all of us, we created *La Madeleine*. This puts links to the other newsletters all in one place so we can read about one another's work. Thank you to Rob Brodrick for assisting with the newsletter. Suggestions are always welcome for the newsletter and website. So let us know your ideas.

### **Our role in the Church**

We are a canonically approved private association of the faithful under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. As a separate branch of the Marianist Family we have our own official recognition in the church. We maintain regular contact with the pontifical council and are grateful for the guidance and assistance. We especially appreciate logistical assistance with such things as getting Visas when coming to Rome for official meetings. We are participated in the Pontifical Council for the Laity's international gathering for the laity; Ernest Kasongo represented us. We visit Council every two years and stay in contact in between. The warm welcome of the Council is an affirmation of Marianist work around the world.

Upon his selection as pope, the Team sent an official congratulatory letter along with personal greetings to Pope Francis.

### **New Foundations and Communities**

In today's world, Marianist lay women and men are becoming mobile. In some instances, there are lay Marianists eager to begin new communities with no previous Marianist presence. These must be supported for they show a true missionary spirit. But there must be a clearer process for identifying new lay Marianists and new communities. This is especially important given our canonical responsibility. We are responsible and must account for those calling themselves lay Marianists. Of particular note, is to treat with suspicion those asking for money on our behalf. As has already been noted, recognition bestows other rights and responsibilities, such as the privilege of having delegate rights within the IO-MLC. In an effort to make clear to the wider Church, we have proposed and prepared a document for bishops and priests with questions about an MLC. This would articulate our statutes and canonical recognition and would be accompanied by a letter from the IO-MLC president and the National Responsible, assuring the validity and good standing of an MLC.

### **Finances**

The IO-MLC works on small budget. Income is limited and depends on the generosity of a few. Isabella reminded us of the dues formula respectful of a person's income (1 hour's wage as dues).

The Team must be accountable for every dollar given to us. Income and expenses are tracked and receipts are documented. Monthly reports are created. Isabella noted that when dues are paid they are for the use of the IO-MLC as a whole. Funds are kept in several bank accounts, for convenience, but collectively they are treated as one. We follow our "Guidelines for Finances." All delegates are encouraged to be familiar with this document.

Felix Arqueros Perez then explained the financial report provided to delegates in our packets. Records were provided for each of the last five years, with acknowledgment that in 2009/2010, finances were handled by his predecessor.

Revenue comes from three sources: dues, donations, and bank interest.

Expenses are in the following areas: participation in the World Council of the Marianist Family; communication (translation, telephone); travel of the team (IO-MLC coincides with WCMF to best use travel budget); dues to the World Council; website; calendars during Chaminade year, etc. Some expenses are shared with other branches of the Marianist Family according to the number of members. Other expenses include international team meeting expenses; bank fees; wire transfers, etc.; larger church efforts related to formation, justice, international church meetings (such as the one Ernest represented us at) and dues to other international networks. Felix stated that everyone must participate in finances to participate in other things. The Scholarship policies are an example of this. Countries couldn't ask for scholarship if they themselves weren't contributing.

Felix also thanked the Society of Mary who hosts and feeds the leadership team during the WCMF meetings. We are grateful and acknowledge it isn't something we should expect.

## **REGIONAL REPORTS**

For statistics about each region please see the IO-MLC directory

### **North America, Australia, Ireland and Asia**

**Susan Vogt**

Susan began her report by describing unique characteristics of the countries within her region.

Susan then reported on strengths, challenges, and issues for the region:

Five strengths –

- 1) Commitment and hospitality
- 2) Diversity – racial, age, income, geographic
- 3) Creativity – in community and social justice
- 4) Technology
- 5) Perseverance, especially in national disasters

Five Challenges

- 1) Distance - 12 time zones
- 2) Languages
- 3) Natural disasters
- 4) Lack of funds – resources exist yet it is a challenge to see value in paying for faith
- 5) Identity – variety in understanding of commitment as a lay Marianist

Four Issues

- 1) Formation

- 2) Three countries no longer have presence of vowed religious (Australia, Philippines, Haiti)
- 3) Aging communities
- 4) MLC's tend to draw together people who are alike

## **Latin America**

### **Isabel Duarte**

Isabel began her report with a slide show.

Countries are very diverse. Some countries have organized and active local family councils while others don't have councils or have councils that are dependent on the people and attitudes of those involved. There is diversity among Marianist laity as well.

Between 2009-2013, there have been two regional assemblies. In 2011 lay Marianists met in Ecuador with participation from the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

The efforts of the 2011 assembly were to deepen our Marianist reality and call for common guidelines to review our lived reality, our expression of the charism, and the challenges of our common mission. Participants worked, prayed, and identified five challenges to pursue. A challenge of the gathering was follow-up afterward.

Most recently lay Marianists from Latin America met in January 2014 in Peru. The theme of the meeting was "Inclusion and Synergy in the Marianist Family." A guiding document was prepared in Peru prior to the meeting. At the gathering, participants prayed, saw examples from one another about living the charism, shared stories of mission, and celebrated being family. An agreed-upon outcome of January's meeting is to work on reaffirming and strengthening our lay vocation.

Other efforts included supporting a youth meeting that was held in conjunction with World Youth Day in Brazil and representation of MLC at the 3d Latin American Congress (CELAM). Offered to MLCs and lay Marianists are Virtual Learning Courses (online). However, participation in these formation courses is low.

Isabel says, "If there spirit is moving we can work together. We have to trust our hearts and our mind must be at the service of what is born in the heart. Our hands and feet make that work happen, making us a better witness to faith of the heart."

## **Europe - Felix**

### **Arqueros Perez**

Felix began his report with a video.

Felix stated Europe is a huge region full of wonderful people.

He thanked National Responsibles and Assessors for their commitment and efforts.

A significant recent event was the European MLC meeting in 2013 in Madrid. Amid the diversity of cultures and languages present, Assessors and National Responsibles present felt a sense of family growing the kingdom of God. The theme of the meeting was “Being Marianist. Being Family.”

## **Zambia, Malawi, Kenya**

### **Francisca Mbuji Jere**

Francisca shared that they have a 2 year formation program before consecration. There is also a program to form the formators.

The region has a council with representation of 2 lay Marianists from each country and 1 Marianist religious.

She articulated that a challenge for Malawi is its geography which limits participation by the Society of Mary.

Common events include a Day of Recollection (Chaminade Day) and also a celebration of the Visitation. These events are funded locally by individuals and communities who participate.

Francisca then articulated some local challenges:

- 1) Youth Groups (forming them and maintaining them)
- 2) Failure to accomplish projects due to finances
- 3) Distance
- 4) Recruiting new members
- 5) Some people join the group for personal gain

Through the Formation of the Formators program, they hope to begin to address the challenges. As a region they are on their way to formalize a Family Council.

### **Assessor – Bro. Domingo Fuentes, SM**

For Bro. Domingo, shared his journey of the last 8 years.

These have been years of experience of presence and connection with every moment. It has been a blessing to walk alongside MLCs and entire Marianist Family in the world.

He share that his role on the team has been a time of grace and he is grateful to God, to the Marianist Family and the World Council. He said, “I think I’ve been religious on the Intl Team and among MLCs, and part of the MLCs while with the SM. But perhaps better said, I’ve been a Marianist with other Marianists.”

As Assessor he tried to do what the team wanted, attentive to prayer, Marianist tradition, our Founders, and our faith.

As a team we have been watchful in our meetings and in our lives, and available to do God’s will. We don’t speak 3 languages, however, we have grown in other forms of communication - communicating the essential, the interior, our basic convictions.

A lesson learned: If you get involved, you can let yourself be embraced, what you think and want can be fulfilled and the desired grace will be received.

Some points to remember:

1. The way Mary's faith remains our source of inspiration for us in the Church and the world.
2. The Marianist charism is truly a treasure that the Lord has given us, we cannot hide or keep it to ourselves. It must be multiplied in the Church and in the world. We need to grow as individuals and as a group, in quality and quantity.
3. New projects and, above all, a shared mission in the Marianist Family (especially among the poor), will help us live a more unifying experience of God in life and in mission.