

Annual Report to the Marianist Family Council of No. America
Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
Nov. 4, 2004

Let us courageously put ourselves to work, not letting ourselves be frightened by the greatness of the task. Let us think only of what we are doing at the moment, and of doing it well.

- Adele, Letters, August 3, 1814

Introduction

Since its beginning six years ago the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative has sought to facilitate the involvement of Marianist communities in North America in promoting the virtue of social justice. The Sodality of Father Chaminade is the model for the MSJC. Joseph Verrier records that at a meeting of the Sodality in 1804 a young orator of the Sodality said:

“Virtue establishes order and produces happiness in the world...How satisfying it would be for me to be able, in a few words, to depict virtue wearing all its charm and adorned with its admirable effects...I will be happy enough if I can persuade you that virtue establishes order; that order is the virtue of the universe; and that this order establishes the just relationships which should exist among men, and between men and the God from whom all happiness comes.” *Jalons*, (Vol. 1, pp. 471-6)

The Sodality was a collaborative of many groups who mutually supported each other to help bring about a just order in society. MSJC is engaged in a similar enterprise - to enable the Marianist Family to grow in its practice of social justice.

This report will briefly outline what have been the efforts and successes of the Collaborative for the past year.

I. Collaborative Spirit in the Leadership As the Sodality of Chaminade was a community of many talents supporting each other, so the Collaborative has benefited from a similar spirit:

- The leadership of the Marianist Sisters, the Society of Mary and MLNNA has whole heartedly given moral and financial support.
- The Steering Committee met with issue team chairs Jan 16-18, 2004 in Dayton to set goals and objectives for one year. The Steering Committee has met regularly since then on conference calls.
- The Operating Procedures for the Steering Committee were formulated by the Steering Committee and approved by the Family Council.
- Issue team chairs became members of the Steering Committee and a Coordinating Committee of Leanne Jablonski, Cristina Dominguez, Ted Cassidy and Jim Vogt was chosen by the Steering Committee. The Coordinating Committee has met regularly on conference calls to prepare the Steering Committee meetings and deal with immediate business.

II. Issue Team Activities: The reports of the Issue Teams are submitted separately with this report.

III. Financial Report. Last year's financial report and the approved budget for this year are submitted separately.

IV. Collaborative Spirit in Implementing the Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 – Develop the means to communicate the gospel message of social justice with the extended Marianist Family.

- We began an e-newsletter, *Justice Jottings*, and send it bimonthly to 350 people.
- The website has been completely redesigned and is functioning well.
- A relationship with the CMSC office in Philadelphia has been established and Cathy O'Rourke assists in many of our functions.
- A logo has been designed.
- Three Marianists have contributed reflections on justice topics for the web site.
- *Nova* published an article on the Issue Teams.

Goal 2 – Involve as many members of the Marianist Family as possible – as individuals and communities – in a deepening solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed, as we struggle for a world of peace and justice for all creation.

- Three Jansen seminars were conducted in Baltimore, St. Louis and the Los Angeles area at which Marianists dialogued on ways to reach to the poor.
- We are planning an immersion experience with a social justice project as part of the Steering Committee annual meeting in January 2005 in San Antonio.
- We contacted Bro. Javier Anso, Sr. Estella Ibarra and Tony Garascia about our desire to connect internationally with others in the Marianist Family. We sent a proposal to the World Council of the Marianist Family for consideration at their November meeting.
- We are presently preparing a letter to all Marianist communities inviting them to reflect on various aspects of social justice.

Goal 3 - Develop a relationship with the major Marianist entities (ministries, networks, institutions and organizations) to assist the integration of the importance of justice within their agendas and in acting on issues of justice.

- **Director of Peace and Justice, Myles McCabe** -- Numerous contacts between Myles and the Collaborative have been made. Myles is an ex officio member of the Steering Committee. He and Jim Vogt speak at least biweekly by phone. Plans are to have a representative of the MSJC Steering Committee on the Province Justice & Peace Advisory Committee.
- **Faith and Culture Task Force** –We co-sponsored a gathering in Covington, KY this past July with the Faith and Culture Task Force. This was a very successful meeting,

providing guidelines for Marianists to deal with our culture. Twenty-five Marianists, lay and religious, attended. The four days consisted of six working sessions, each centered on a major section of a paper written by Victor Forlani titled “How Do We Connect”. Victor’s text is a description of movements in society, religion, the Catholic Church, religious orders and the Marianist Family. “How Do We Connect” also describes ways of addressing those trends and relating across the borders between the various segments of church and society.

- **Marianist staffed parishes** - Jim Vogt and issue team representatives gave presentations at the April meeting of Marianist parishes.
- **Common Bond** - Jim Vogt wrote an article about MSJC for the Common Bond newsletter. Myles, Ted and Jim met with Myron Achbach to explore ways that Common Bond members could get involved with us.
- **LIFE groups** – Jim talked with Brian Reavey, new LIFE national coordinator, in August. They will talk further after two key LIFE planning meetings.
- **Assn. of Marianist Universities** – Jim Vogt made initial contact with Ray Fitz in the spring. This network is still at the early stages of organizing. Jim will talk more with Ray later.
- **NACMS** – Jim talked with NACMS director Carol Ramey in the spring and contributed a prayer on social justice to their spring issue of Soundings.
- **SM Retreat Planning Committee** – We met twice with them about ways to integrate a social justice emphasis in the 2005 retreats.
- **Marianist United Nations NGO** – Bro. Steve O’Neil joined a conference call of the Steering Committee to dialogue about possible future relationships. Ted Cassidy visited the UN with Steve.
- **Marianist Development Office** - Lisa Gooding met with the Steering Committee and with Jim Vogt to discuss ways to support MSJC and increase funding.

Goal 4 – Develop, complete and set up a process for the Marianist Family to take public positions on social justice issues.

- The Anti-Racism Issue Team has prepared a statement (submitted separately) for the Marianist Family Council. This statement is designed to ask for a response from Marianists in North America, asking them to sign on to it by pledging to act to dismantle racism. Those who pledge will list what they have already done to help dismantle racism and what they plan to do in the future.

<p>May the deeds of our hands, the work through which we proclaim the Gospel in the name of your Marianist family, be fruitful, multiply and bring forth justice, peace and your mercy. Prayer from the MSJC/Faith and Culture Gathering - July 2004</p>

V. Present and Future Plans the Steering Committee is currently discussing:

- Plan and offer a workshop on community organizing and/or the development of skills for doing the work of justice

- Offer funds to support people who want to attend training workshops that other peace and justice groups offer.
- Develop theological reflection/social analysis tools and materials. Focus particularly on presenting the justice perspective or experience of our founders and some justice heroes in the Marianist Family from more recent times.
- A team is being trained and organized to offer the Cultural Audit workshop in various parts of the country for Marianists.

**Thank you for our future:
before we know it, before we see it, before we enter it,
in faith, we invite you to beckon us on, O God,
that we may be your people
and you may be our God.
We commit ourselves to you
as we enter this time and place
and our brave conversations together.
We will risk hearing each other,
trust ourselves to each other in faith
and await the presence of your Spirit among us, O God. Amen.**
Prayer from the MSJC/Faith and Culture Gathering - July 2004

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Cassidy, SM
Chair MSJC