

Lay Marianist Formation Program

Summaries and Questions for Sponsors

Unit 1: Charism and Mission

The following summaries and discussion questions are to help you, as a sponsor, orient yourself to the conversations your aspirant has been having. It is intended as context and a conversation starter, not as a checklist or limit to your conversations. You are encouraged to use your own knowledge of your sponsored aspirant and follow the movement of the Spirit in your conversations.

Becoming a Lay Marianist is not simply joining a group like any other, it is ultimately a matter of receiving the charism as a matter of one's personal *vocation*. Moreover, the Marianist charism is a mission-based charism: we are called to bring Christ to the world through the animation of inclusive, life-giving communities in the church and world. In the first unit of our formation program, we discussed these ideas as follows:

Summary of Charism and Vocation: Participants reflected on what it means to receive the Marianist "thing" as both a *charism* and a *vocation*.

- We used the definition of a **charism** as a gift of the Holy Spirit given for building up the church and world. Based on this definition, the goal is for participants to reflect on how becoming and being a Lay Marianist is not just a thing to do or interesting group to belong to, but moreover a way of being of service to the church and world through the gift of who they are because of how they live as a Marianist.
- We used the concept of a **vocation** as a call that often comes from within and over time as a response to one's circumstances and situation in the world. It is where your greatest gift meets the world's greatest need. Based on this, the goal is for participants to discern if and how their natural gifts meet the needs in the world.
- **The goal:** The desired goal of these conversations is for our aspiring Lay Marianists to discern if and how receiving the Marianist charism will help them continue to align who they are and their greatest gifts with what the world needs and how they can be a gift to the world through who they are and what they do.

Summary of the Marianist Mission: In this session, participants learned about the Marianist mission to inspire people of faith to join in alliance with Mary's mission of bringing Christ to the world through the animation of inclusive, life-giving communities in the church and world. The idea of being in alliance with Mary was emphasized, including her "bottom up" way of animating community. Community animation is a way of helping communities be full of life and reach their full potential. This is found when people listen to their own gifts and callings by the Holy Spirit, are attentive to the needs of Christ in the world, and meet that need by doing "whatever he tells you."

Discernment Starter Questions for Discussion:

- Knowing what you do about the Marianist charism, how do you think your natural gifts align with the gift of the Marianist charism?
- Do you feel a vocational calling to meet the world's needs through the use of your natural gifts and formation in the Marianist charism? How so?
- What difference do you think you can make by being in alliance with Mary and following her way of animating community in the church and world today?