Themes in the Marianist Higher Education Tradition

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Community/Family

Our tradition emphasizes collaborative and cooperative process among the faculty, staff, administration, and students as well as the larger community of parents and the local civic community. This interdependence is based on a respect for individual autonomy and the reality of our individual autonomy. The collection of many talents from all of these people enriches the results and process of education. Teachers never teach alone.

## Continual Mission

The Marianist tradition emphasizes the importance of developing a structure and process that are self-perpetuating rather than only tied to the leadership or certain individuals. The atmosphere of the school and of each individual classroom is formative in gospel values and in that sense just being in that atmosphere is like “being on a mission or retreat.”

## Reflection/Interior Life

“The essential is the interior” is a key theme in the Marianist tradition. There is an emphasis on personal experience, insight in the life of the mind and heart. Hence, the Marianist tradition encourages habits of reflection and the development of the interior life.

## Response to the Needs of the Times

This Marianist educational theme is a major focal point in the meeting of faith and culture, which is the privileged challenge of the school. Guided experience, critical appraisal of the academic and the cultural serve as focal points in this theme. In this perspective, educational service incorporates both tradition and innovation. We neither simply look to the past nor get stuck in the present but utilize both for our call to the future.

## Emphasis on the Person

Institutions are valuable in the Marianist tradition as they emphasize the individual in the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual context. All of these characteristics are interconnected in the process of personal and academic development in the school context.

## Institutional Change

The Marianists have a tradition, based on the early work of the order in France after the revolution, of supporting continuing renovation of institutions. Teachers in schools in the Marianist tradition exemplify this approach by helping to create a sense in their students of commitment to making an impact in the world of institutions that they are presently part of and in which they will live in the future. We are in a transformative tradition.

## Attraction

The Marianist educational heritage emphasizes that people are convinced by what is done rather than by what is said. Intellectual understanding does not necessarily change behavior. Modeling the desired attitudes and values is an expectation for faculty, staff and administration.

## Attitude of Mary

Marianist tradition is based on the example of Mary, the mother of Christ. Her behavior exemplified flexibility, nurturance, patience, service, hospitality and collaboration. Marianist tradition represents a process as much as a product. In fact, we understand that, in a very real way, the process is a product.

“The institution seemed to open new avenues in education. Besides why go through the trouble of founding a new school if we are not to be different, if we do not mean to excel? We can already boast of what has been called our family spirit, excluding both pedantry and mercantilism; it should be called our evangelical spirit because it springs naturally from the practice of a sincere and enlightened religious devotedness. A bold and timely initiative introduced several improvements later copied by other schools.”

Jean-Baptiste Lalanne, S.M., Early Marianist Educator