

(Continued) **PART THREE: The Experience of Being Called**

EFFECTS OF GOD'S CALL

To help us exercise faith of the heart in regard to our Marianist vocation, let us reflect a bit more on what happens when God chooses us and calls us. This new way of God being present in our life brings about a deep change – if we accept the call. Through faith of heart, we can notice a change taking place in us. Why is this so?

First of all, when God chooses us, God takes possession of our life. God so makes us his own in calling us that our existence is altered. God often changes the names of those who are called in order to manifest their new state. “You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give,” God said to Isaiah, in Is 62:2. In the Book of Revelation 2:17, the Spirit says those who persevere in following Jesus will receive “a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one know except the one who receives it.” The new name signifies a new life, an altered existence. The very orientation of our life and what most moves us is changed by God’s call. The custom in some religious orders of changing a person’s name at the time of religious profession is to symbolize the change that should take place in the life of the one called. The change required is not necessarily from sin to grace, but from grace to sanctity.

When we experience God calling us, we also experience our world changing. Our call does not mean separation from the world, but it does mean dealing with the world in a new way. “I have chosen you out of the world,” Jesus told his disciples. But he also says to God, “I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.” They “do not belong to the world”; nevertheless, “I have sent them into the world,” Jn 15:19, 17:15-16, 18. God’s call changes our relationship with the world.

When God takes possession of our life through a vocation, the change in us is radical. This does not mean, however, that it is violent or sudden. It might be very gradual, but eventually it will be total. The change stops only when we resist or do not cooperate. Our habits change; our way of thinking changes – everything changes. “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lust, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God”

Ephesians 4:22-24. For the Marianist, this radical change is concretized in taking on – completely – the virtues of Jesus, which we pointed out as the first characteristic of our Marianist call.

There is a second important element in our vocation. As we mentioned above, God's call always includes a mission. Father Chaminade insisted that every Marianist is a missionary. Jesus himself said, "I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last," John 15:16.

It is not necessary that we know exactly what we are to do, but we are to know that God wants to do good through us.

"Do whatever he tells you," John 2:5. Our special mission is to perform on our neighbor's behalf all the works of zeal and of mercy...

Our work is far-reaching; it is magnificent. If it is universal the reason is that we are missionaries of Mary, who has said to us: "Do whatever he tells you."

This sense of mission leads us to be constantly attentive to the inner inspirations and providential signs that are indications of "whatever he tells you." It likewise urges us to act promptly to carry out the services indicated.

There is yet a third radical shift in our life when God calls us. In choosing us, God wants to become the source of everything we need. We often make life a burden by trying to shape it ourselves. We try to accomplish things with our own resources. We try to establish our own importance, or we look for it in the approval of others. We tend to assure our own freedom and reasonable comfort. But God calls us to a life far greater than the possibilities of our own resources, and therefore the Lord himself offers to become the source of everything.

To believe God calls us is to also believe the promise of Christ: "I will do whatever you ask in my name," John 14:13. The twelve, in fact, experienced this Providence. What beautiful reality works in the lives of those who are called and who believe in God's Providence for them!

REACPITULATION

Let's paint in broad strokes what we have just covered.

We talked about *spirituality* as a set of guidelines to follow. Every religious order has a set of guidelines to follow, for example, Jesuit Spirituality, Franciscan Spirituality, and even non-Catholic religions such as, Protestant Spirituality, Buddha Spirituality, etc. As we will see, Marianist Spirituality has Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mother of Jesus, as its roots.

Our *initial broad strokes* were about Spirit and Mind, and the Holy Spirit, and included the Practice of the Presence of God. And we just finished with our *previous broad strokes* on the Experience of Being Called and the first characteristic being our ***desire*** not only *to be formed* but *to live the Virtues of Jesus* in our own lives. The second characteristic being our ***call to mission***.

Lastly, the three-fold effects of God's call on us. The first is that ***God takes possession of our life!*** (As you can see, I like to use bold.) The second is our vocation to the mission to "***Do whatever He tells you.***" And third, is letting God be the source of everything in our lives, to believe in ***God's Providence!***

This and the Six Principles of Marianist Spirituality that we will cover in the next Part, prepares us for ***Mary's role*** in all this.