

PART THREE: The Experience of Being Called

It would be good at this point as a reminder that ***A Manual of Marianist Spirituality*** is for everyone who wishes to live the *Charism or Spirituality of Blessed Father William Joseph Chaminade* whether Lay or Religious. The ***Family of Mary*** consists of mainly two branches, the *Lay* and *Religious*. The Religious Branch consists of the **Daughters of Mary** or *FMI*, our Religious Women group and the **Society of Mary**, *SM*, our Religious Men group and our **STATE**, or Vowed Lay group. The other Lay Branch consists of our **Lay Family of Mary, Alliance**, and **Marianist Affiliates**. Our *Marianist Spirituality* is still not confined or restricted to the above but anyone who is, again, interested in following the Charism or Spirituality of Father William Joseph Chaminade.

No one can live the Marianist way of life successfully unless God calls him or her to it. It is not merely a personal decision. Our Marianist life is a way of going to Jesus, and “*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me*” John 6:44. In other words, unless we have an experience of being called by God, we will have a difficult time understanding and living Marianist spirituality.

Father Chaminade has an interesting comment to those responsible for forming the candidates or person interested in the Society of Mary. He says they should not explain too much about the Marianist way of life until a person is convinced in faith that he or she is being called by God to live that life.

Sometimes it would even be dangerous to explain the beautiful paths of Christian and religious perfection to those who are still dominated by their own passions or who have not yet savored the inestimable gift of being called by God.

If we look closely at this statement, we see that Father Chaminade is not speaking merely about being convinced with our mind that God is calling us, but we also *feel* it in some way. We *savor* it. In other words, if a person does not believe with faith of the heart that God is calling, that person will not understand the ways of God in relation to the Marianist Family. In fact, she or he might easily misunderstand God’s ways.

The experience of being called by God comes to us through faith of the heart. It is not something we experience as coming from the outside or something apart from

us. There might be external providential signs to confirm our call or other people who help us, but these are merely helps and confirmation of our interior call. We experience our call precisely in acts of faith of the heart – that is, we believe with our mind and embrace with our feelings the fact that God is calling us.

[The mere fact that you are reading still reading this series of short articles is a good sign that God is calling you to a deeper relationship through Chaminade's spirituality!]

Exercise: What do you believe concerning God's call to you? How do you feel about it?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CALL TO BE MARIANIST

An authentic call to follow Jesus in the way of Marianist spirituality always has two general characteristics. *First* of all, we have a desire to be formed in the virtues of Jesus and to live those virtues in our own life. We want (even though we might have great resistance from our ego) to become one with Jesus, living his own attitudes and dispositions. We experience this call as a realization that we must allow our inner personality to change and to be formed in the image of Jesus himself. When our feelings are eager for such a change, we are believing also with our heart.

The *second* characteristic of our call is a sense of mission. In taking on the virtues of Jesus, we also sense being called to work for the coming of God's Kingdom and to carry out in the world today the works of Christ. We catch the sense of urgency that burned in the heart of Jesus: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" Luke 12:40.

Although we speak of two aspects of our vocation and although we can deal with them separately, they are in fact inseparable. On the one hand, the virtues of Jesus in us are not complete until they are expressed in doing his work; and on the other hand, it is impossible to do the works of Jesus except in the power of his virtues.