

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

A series of significant events that we have experienced during this past year, such as, among others, the official approbation of the Marianist Lay Communities on the part of the Church, the participation of the Marianist Lay Communities in the Second World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities and the First Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities in Latin America, the General Chapter of the Society of Mary, and the foundation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate in Ranchi, India with the support of our brothers, have made us more conscious

that truly the Lord has made us a great Family of laity, men and women religious and consecrated persons in the world,
that this deed has been a precious gift for our lives, permitting us to rejoice in a special manner in the aspects of communion and family of the Church community,
and that, like all gifts received from the Lord, this gift is also a task placed in our hands in order to offer it to the Church and the world of today.

Christmas is near. Its celebration evokes anew in all Christians a desire to turn towards the manger so as to contemplate the mystery of the birth of the Lord, a mystery that reveals God's plan of salvation for all humanity, a mystery that illuminates our lives and fills us with meaning and hope.

This year, we invite you, therefore, in a special way to gather together, as Family, in order to contemplate how this mystery takes place in the bosom of that other Family of Nazareth in which ours – and the entire Church – has its mirror and image: of a Family

that is not born of human planning but of the gratuitous love of God, the only true Father, who gives Himself in the Spirit;
that germinates in the bosom of Mary by her acceptance of this gift with a faith filled heart;
that, generating the Son of God as a universal Brother, places itself at the service of His mission, which is to embrace all of humanity in Him.

There, admiring and adoring the mystery of God with us, our contemplation becomes a prayer of thanksgiving and of petition.

Thank you, Father, for the gift of the Spirit of love and of communion.

Assist us to be conscious of your gifts
and to make them fruitful for the good of our sisters and brothers,
the men and women of our world.

Thank you, Mary, for opening the door of humanity to the Lord
so that truly God is with us.

Teach us to live from our faith,
open so that the Word embraces our persons and our lives
so as to make Himself really present in our history.

Thank you, Joseph, spouse and adoptive father,
for having put your life at the service of the plan of God.
Assist us to recognize the life of the Spirit which sprouts in the lives of others,
and to welcome, accompany and serve them with our life,
as you did in the life of Mary and Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus, for having come as Brother.
With your birth you opened the paths of the Reign of God in our human
history.

In the silence of all those recently born,
your first word was only your presence, that of a fragile and needy babe,
your first throne, a manger.

Assuming the poverty and the marginalization of the "last place,"
you became Brother to all without exclusion.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
as Marianist Family,
we ask you to assist us in our goal of mutually assisting one another
to open our lives to the Will of God
and our doors to the world
in order to offer the life generated by the Spirit in us
– at the Temple and to the shepherds, to the Magi and to the innocents of today
–
to the Church that seeks to be faithful in its mission,
to those who are near and do not know the Good News,
to those who come from afar and are searching for it,
to the innocent victims of our world,
especially the children mistreated or abandoned to their own fate.

Brothers and Sisters may this Christmas cause to grow in us the spirit of Family
in the image and likeness of the Family of Nazareth. It is our hope that in each
place where we are present, this impulse will be translated into concrete

activities of mutual collaboration in the mission that the Lord has confided to us as Marianists.

Merry Christmas!

The World Council of the Marianist Family
Christmas 2006