

THE VISITATION MARIANIST STATE COMMUNITY

Background to choice of name - 2012

After forty-six years as the “Marianist State Community,” why would we choose to adopt a new name? Some would respond, “Isn’t a forty-six year old name a settled issue?” A valid point. Others might say, “Let’s stay open to the possibility of re-naming because ‘nothing is impossible with God.’”

The key to answering the question lies in response to the Spirit’s promptings and a period of prayerful community discernment. Over the years, some members of the community experienced an unsettled feeling that our name needed to resonate more with our identity and distinguish us from other State communities. After an extended process of prayer and dialogue among community members, on April 27, 2012, we chose Visitation Marianist State Community as our new name. So why did we choose “Visitation”?

As Marianists we are called to embody the spirit of Jesus and Mary. The story of the Visitation encapsulates the requisites of that call. Once Mary consented and received Jesus into her life, she followed an urgent prompting to share the Good News. Luke tells us Mary “went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country” (Lk 1:39) to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, a woman who was not only barren but also getting on in years. Both women experienced miracles in their lives in that each was pregnant for, indeed, nothing was impossible with God. Mary and Jesus were received with joy by both Elizabeth and John the Baptist. Mary responded with her deeply meaningful and powerful Magnificat that describes her spirit of gratitude and challenge, humility and strength, steadfastness and risk-taking – dispositions which we aspire to embody.

Elements of the Visitation that resonate with us include paying attention to internal promptings of the Spirit, bearing the Good News in mission to others, welcoming visits joyfully, providing hospitality, bridging generations, honoring and connecting with family, forming community, giving service, mentoring younger ones, and lifting up the lowly in justice.

As the community “gets on in years,” we can identify with an Elizabeth who heartily welcomed Mary and Jesus into her home. As Marianist Family we honor their relationship and give witness to the power of community. By living the elements mentioned above, we echo Mary’s “yes” and join in her mission of bearing Jesus wherever called. As the Visitation State Community we expect miracles of fruitful change along the way as we work together to uplift the people of God in a more just and peaceful world – for nothing is impossible with God.

Linda Zappacosta, August 31, 2012

COMMON RULE OF THE VISITATION MARIANIST STATE COMMUNITY

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Revised 2008

Introduction to the 2008 Edition

Since the COMMON RULE describes the faith and identity of a living community, occasional modification of the document is necessary. The State Community reviewed the COMMON RULE in 1990 and again in 2008 and we celebrate the fact that it continues to express and give meaning to our commitments and to challenge us to interpret and ponder the complex and varied realities of today's world. There are, however, a few aspects of the document that call for either revision or comment. These notes attempt to explain the minor revisions made in 2008, and to nuance some important concepts and themes that, while somewhat problematic, we have decided not to modify at this time.

Language. We have attempted to use inclusive language throughout the document. Sometimes the formulations are awkward and clumsy, but we seek and will continue to seek to be inclusive in the way we describe ourselves and in the way we pray. The Community accepts the responsibility to find language that is true to our understanding of God and which challenges us to expand our images of God.

We acknowledge that our call to holiness involves a "creative tension" described in the Gospel of John as "being in the world but not of the world." We recognize that we are called to oppose evil and oppression where and when we find it, but we recognize, too, that discerning evil and grace is not always as easy as it sounds. Many of us bear the spiritual and psychological bruises which come from confronting death-dealing choices, attitudes, and policies in ourselves, our own families, and in the workplace. Yet we seek to live in hope: as best as we can, and as part of God's unfolding creation, we seek to bring the world and ourselves to completion in Christ.

There has emerged a deeper sense that the concept of the "world" includes an appreciation and concern for the Earth. Many State members have experienced a significant deepening of their own spirituality as it has become more centered in the Earth. There is also a sense that the emerging worldwide global community is itself a part of the ecosystem called Earth. How in these times does the human community participate responsibly in the interconnected life processes of the Earth? To embrace the world, to live in the world, is to embrace the responsibility to discern the Spirit's direction and to act boldly on behalf of the Earth when needed.

Rule of Life. The concept of "rule of life" can appear antiquated and rigid, yet it remains an important concept to this State Community. To embrace the call of holiness imposes a certain discipline. When reflected upon and consciously accepted, this discipline can become one's "rule." To be compassionate toward the Earth, the oppressed, or any who suffer requires a change of heart and action. Each member's rule of life will be a different expression of the call to holiness, yet we all seek to embrace common values and the discipline of compassion and action implied in the COMMON RULE.

A number of changes to the process of electing the Steering Committee Offices have occurred and this revision now reflects our practice. The term of offices increased from two to three years to allow more continuity of leadership. The process for elections

of the Steering Committee was changed in 2005 from one conducted within the space of the fall retreat to one of reflection and voting prior to the retreat. This additional time for reflection upon the open office and gifts of the members provides for a nomination and voting which can be conducted electronically, thus eliminating this business from the retreat. Newly elected member(s) come to the retreat knowing the election results and are installed during the liturgy.

Procedures for admission of new members has been expanded to offer more direction to the Head of Recruitment for the expected steps the Community desires for new members.

The timing for annual renewal of the Vow of Stability was moved from Spring to Fall.

The suggested level of contributions to the State was increased from 1% to 1.25% of gross income.

We affirm our intention to revise this document as we see ways to express our mission more fully.

INTRODUCTION

1. Fr. William Joseph Chaminade, founder of the Family of Mary, believed that those persons he drew together in a spirituality and mission based on Mary's role in the Church would "prove that the Gospel, in all its depth, is as practicable today as it was in the early Church."¹ Religious life was for Chaminade a radical embodiment of the evangelical counsels. The lay groups he formed, as well as the ones which continue his vision today, have a special concern in seeing that the Gospel is embodied everywhere and in all aspects of life. The Family of Mary, then, is made up of the members of the religious institutes (the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary) and numerous lay groups and communities.
2. One of the unique vocations within the Family of Mary is the State of Religious Living in the World. Our COMMON RULE flows from our recognition of the State as a vocation, a call from God, and provides a framework within which this vocation might be most fully lived today.
3. Nonetheless, it is important to see all that follows within the context of a continuing search for the meaning of our vocation. It is a search for God as we have been called to follow God. We must remember that our vocation, our call, is, like any vocation, also a mystery and thus something that we ourselves will never be able to completely define. "A mystery is a reality we can never fully put into concepts or word. We can never fully understand it, we can never see all of it at once. The only way we can possess a mystery is by living it."²
4. The COMMON RULE should not be seen, therefore, as the definitive, unchanging statement of what it means to be a member of the State. It is not intended to be a constitution, but rather should be read as an expression or description of the State. This expression will certainly evolve as we all grow and mature in our understanding of this vocation.
5. The COMMON RULE is divided into two main sections. Part I identifies and describes those aspects of a State commitment that are at its very foundations. It reflects the long process of establishing the basic elements of a State commitment in our present world. Part II presents some ways in which we can assist one another in living out this commitment in this State Community.

¹ Fr. Chaminade to Fr. Noailles, February 15, 1826, *Letters*, Vol. 2, No. 388.

² Rev. Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, *Mary in Modern Spirituality* (St. Louis: Maryhurst Press, 1967), p. 27.

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PART I: THE STATE AS A VOCATIONAL CHOICE

6. There is a good deal of anxiety and uncertainty today regarding what specifically is involved in the choice to commit oneself to a person, mission, or ideal. Those who have made a commitment in the State are not immune to these feelings or tenuousness and doubt. This is particularly true since we are all in different local communities and life situations. The important thing is that we seek out the unity in our diversity, discern growthful patterns within rapidly changing conditions, and work with the tensions caused by our binding commitment in a society which allows little permanency. All these—the differences, the changes, the tensions—demand that we accept a certain amount of ambiguity. If we are to keep from being immobilized by this ambiguity, we must delve into the basics, the essential elements of our commitment.
7. First and ultimately our commitment is to God, our Creator, through Christ, in the Spirit. As a community we seek to embody St. Paul's words: "There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them."³ We have been called to be among the People of God; we see ourselves as members of the body of Christ: "Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because of these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ."⁴
8. Secondly, we have chosen to emphasize in our life of following Christ the role of Mary—to learn from her how we are to become closer to her Son. We are committed, then, to personally grow in faith within the community of those dedicated to Mary: The Family of Mary.
9. Thirdly, as members of the State of Religious living in the World, we are just that. We are religious persons, and we live in the world.
10. *We are religious persons. We are vowed laity.* As such we direct our lives and actions toward calling forth in those we touch an awareness of the spiritual reality that grounds our existence. Ours is a mission to form faith-filled people and faithful communities. We seek to assist others as they search for the deeper meaning of their lives, for the meaning of God in their lives. So too in our personal lives we strive to make all our decisions in light of how they could further our growth in faith. We consider it essential to make decisions such as those concerning our life directions—whether to marry, choice of career, place of residence—on the basis of how they will affect our growth toward union with God. In particular, we try to better appreciate and use our possessions, education, time, and money.

³ I Corinthians 12:4-7.

⁴ I Corinthians 12: 12-13.

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This concern for a simpler lifestyle, emulating the poor Woman of Nazareth, is, for many, a virtue that is part of their State commitment and, for some, a movement toward a vow of poverty.

11. *We live in the world.* We do not seek to separate ourselves from the world. We do not minister solely to the spiritual needs of people. Rather we work very much in the milieu of the secular. We are confronted by the same pulls of the secular world as all people. We have jobs, families, secular concerns. We are very much immersed in the reality of the world. We choose to work through our specifically secular life styles to create a just social order and to bring people to God.
12. To be true to our vocation, therefore, involves a very delicate balance, a tension, between living in the world and working in the milieu of the world while maintaining a specific spiritual direction in our lives. It is this tension that we embrace when we choose the State as a vocation.

Vow

13. Taking a vow to God in the spirit of Mary is an essential part of making a commitment in the State. Our hope is that Mary's spirit of faithfulness, hope, and prayerfulness will permeate our lives. Our vow is an enduring one of Stability, taken in common, and personalized yearly to each individual's unique life situation. By taking this vow, we promise fidelity to our calling within the Family of Mary and express our determination to nurture the growth of the Family. This commitment may be lived out in a local faith and/or State community, through one's life work, through prayer, and/or in other ways seen as appropriate by the individual and the State Community.

Prayer

14. Growth in faith does not happen by chance. We actively seek to discern the action of the Spirit in our daily lives. We seek never to allow our relationship with God to become haphazard. We yearn to pray without ceasing and to develop a direction and consistency to our prayer. Regular, personal private prayer, as well as spontaneous prayer, help us to see our work and mission as important ways of encountering God, and help us more consciously consecrate the whole of our lives to the Creator. Times to be alone and quiet with the Lord, times to seek God through community, times to let her come unexpectedly—all are essential.

Rule of Life

15. We commit to regularly evaluate the direction of our lives, our activities, and practices. Are they consistent with the beliefs we profess? Are our present involvements still the best way of living our commitment in the Family or should we redirect our energies? Are the things we are doing working or should we try another tack? We commit ourselves to regular prayer and reflection and attempt to understand the direction and rhythms

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of our lives so that we might live out this vocation of vowed laity. In short, we are called to develop a rule of life.

16. Historically, a rule of life has been viewed as a specific set of routines or practices by which an individual gives his or her life over more completely to God. A rule of life might also be thought of as the practice of those elements that define who we are as vowed laity. A rule might include common Christian practices such as prayer, spiritual direction, evaluation of our life's direction in light of our vow and beliefs or times for listening to the Spirit. For many it includes the study of the Marianist vision and heritage or accepting responsibilities within local, regional, or national communities. Commitment to attendance at retreats and programs of the Community should be considered.
17. Each person's individual rule of life will probably be different so as to be tailored to individual needs and circumstances. It would be possible that where local State communities exist, the work of developing a rule of life could take place in common. Individual communities might even decide on a common framework within which members would include their own specifics. Spiritual direction, where possible, is an important aid in developing a rule of life, for we should never minimize the value that another person can be in assisting us to interpret the action of the Spirit in our lives. But, however they are formulated, individual rules of life are important for our living as vowed laity.

Community

18. Much of what has been said, however, reflects only on our growth in faith as individuals. It is also necessary to recognize the communitarian nature of our vocation. As stated by the Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*, God has chosen to make men and women holy and to save them not merely as individuals but by making them into a single people who acknowledge and serve God in truth and holiness.⁵
19. The charism of the Family of Mary has always included commitment to initiating, living in, and developing Christian community. Community is essential because of our own and other's imperfections. We are incomplete in ourselves and thus the diversity which marks our activities and personalities only serves to emphasize the need to use this diversity as one of our greatest strengths. Our incompleteness demands our dependence on others. We recognize the Spirit in each other and are committed to bringing the presence of the Spirit to each other. This includes sharing with one another the means we find for listening to the Spirit. Also we acknowledge our personal needs for support and nourishment and minister to these as well as our spiritual needs in order to revitalize our energies to serve God. Thus, most are led to build local

⁵ *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Chapter 11, #9.

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communities. Since no local community is complete in itself, we join together with people in other cities who are pursuing the same commitments in other situations.

Mission

20. We understand our mission as one of service and faithfulness to the Family of Mary, which usually means involvement in community-building. It is not easy, however, to build lay communities or Christian communities these days. Being a member of a Marianist lay community is itself a vocation and certainly all will not choose it. We build the Family in a variety of ways because there is no single way of drawing others to Sodality, a style of Christian community we have known and seek to share with others.
21. In some situations, however, our sense of mission demands that we spend much time in pre-evangelization work. We may have to involve ourselves with others to develop human values or work toward changing societal evils before presuming to draw them into a conscious relationship with Christ. At the same time, we view such involvement itself as an important way of building the kingdom now. For we seek to lead all to the fullness of Christ, all the while recognizing that our efforts at building a just and human social order in fact make Christ more fully present today in our world.
22. Some within the State Community may live for a time without benefit of community because of study, work, or life circumstances. We endeavor to support these people 'in diaspora'—those who are physically separated by geographic isolation or those who have chosen to concentrate on performing good works. Still others in the State build the Family community very directly by accepting leadership responsibilities within existing local, regional, national, or international groups, working to nurture and sustain these groups internally.
23. In reflecting on our mission of building lay communities within the Family of Mary, it is significant to remember that God loves all people. Somehow God touches everyone with presence and love. Since a relationship with God and faith are deeply personal, they are also profoundly individual. It is our calling as Christians to respect God's work. While God has commissioned us to do this work, it is easy to become over-zealous and put ourselves in the place of God's will or despair over people not understanding community or Marianist lay communities. In short, we in the State, regardless of how we have chosen to build the Family of Mary must always remember that our attempts to draw others to God require sensitivity and flexibility in order to respect each person's life with God.

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PART II: THE MEANS TO REALIZE OUR VOCATION

24. To provide a structure for the State Community beyond the local level is a response to the practical situation in which we find ourselves. That is, if we are to work out the identity and meaning of our vocation in the State, we are going to have to do it together, finding ways to assist one another in working and living it out. We must recognize the difficulties of physical separation and all that it involves. We recognize that State members can be found all across North America and around the world. We hope for the day when State members from every culture and geographic region will gather together to celebrate our common Marianist heritage.

Retreats

25. The gatherings of the State Community are holy times, times when we come together to reflect on how we have been living as vowed laity. The fact that people from other cities and countries gather helps give a new perspective to our own work. It provides renewal of our commitment and refreshes us with new creative ideas. Others not in our local situation cannot usually work problems through with us or lend constant support or follow-up, but their presence is stimulating to us because of our diversity. The gatherings and the structures we set up should help us to appreciate and grow from our diverse approaches to the State commitment. Our diversity thus becomes a source of nourishment. We strictly establish the majority of time spent together as a retreat and limit business at each retreat. The content of retreats is planned and implemented primarily by the Head of Spiritual Life, with the assistance of the Steering Committee. These persons often ask others to prepare prayer, liturgies, or presentations.

Steering Committee

26. We recognize that most members of the State Community will direct their energies to their local situations, but we ask some persons to also take responsibility for providing an overview and direction for the State Community. A Steering Committee has been formed to discern the needs and concerns of our Community, to determine appropriate activities for gatherings, and to direct the acquisition and distribution of resources. Policies and procedures of the State Community are usually recommended by the Steering Committee for review and approval by the membership. We expect the Steering Committee to keep Marianist heritage and spirituality before us and ask one or more offices to maintain ties with other Family of Mary groups.

27. At this time the Steering Committee positions include a Coordinator, Heads of Spiritual Life, Recruitment, and Instruction, and a moderator. We believe that the Spirit works with and through these individuals. We ask Steering Committee members to stay in close communication with all members of the State Community both electronically and by phone.

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Through this contact, we ask the Steering Committee not only to assess common problems, interest, and needs within the State Community, but also to hold local and regional State communities and/or individuals accountable to the COMMON RULE. The specific tasks of each office, as well as the election process and terms of office are outlined in our POLICIES AND PROCEDURES document.

Membership

28. We define membership in the State Community as those lay persons who have taken the vow described in Part I, paragraph 13, of this COMMON RULE, who have expressed a willingness to embrace and work out in their lives the elements and the spirit of the COMMON RULE, and who attend our retreats. We acknowledge our responsibility to grow and recruit. Therefore, we invite to our retreats persons who are familiar with the State vocation and who are interested in membership in our State Community, and we ask these individuals to discuss membership with the Head of Recruitment. We realize that each new person entering the State Community will bring new ideas and concerns and the Community will be challenged to grow by these ideas and concerns.

Other Activities

29. In between the gatherings of our State Community, we provide support to one another in limited realistic ways. Again, we recognize the limitations of geography and the necessity to work primarily in our local situations. One way of sharing has been to circulate taped lectures, literature, booklists, meditations, etc. The Head of Instruction usually facilitates these formal communications. It has been one of our strengths that there has always been much informal communication and exchange among State members in different cities.

Revision of this Document

30. Finally, we reiterate an earlier statement that we expect this RULE to be altered or amended as we mature and grow individually and as a community. The Steering Committee is charged with deciding when revision is needed and indicating procedures to do so.

Common Rule written 1979; Edited 1990 & 2008

Common Rule of the State Community

Vow Statement of the State Community

1. The vow of Stability in the tradition of the Marianist charism is an immersion into the mystery of our Family of Mary vocation. The vow expresses the Marian implications for Christian life which we seek to live out.
2. The vow challenges members to deeper and broader commitment and the community rejoices in the variety of ways in which the vow is expressed. It respects the gifts and callings of those who come to the State and has both individual and communal dimensions.
3. The meaning of the vow is growing and emerging and cannot be expressed once and for all time.
4. The vow is a sacramental celebration of God's call and his sustaining faithfulness. It symbolizes the life and experience the members have shared together and the hope for future life together.
5. The strength and source of the vow is God's faithfulness to the State Community and to its members. The vow embraces concrete demands and responsibilities for building the kingdom and may be lived out in a variety of lifestyles.
6. The vow reflects bonds of faith, vision, spirituality, and friendship among the members.
7. The community values all members equally.
8. The vow is a covenant which transcends categories of time and measurability.
9. The vow expresses an enduring commitment for all who take it. For some this will mean a lifetime commitment.
10. The members of the State reaffirm their vow annually to aid in recalling important values and in maintaining a perspective of faith.
11. The vow, taken publicly and reaffirmed periodically, defines memberships in this State Community.

Vow Statement written November 7, 1982

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Vow Prayer of the State Community

Loving God, who exists in mystery and community,
who is the first and shall be with the last,
you give strength to the powerless,
freedom to the oppressed,
and shelter to the poor.
You call us into the wilderness
to live as your sons and daughters
and to be formed as your people.
We are bound together by your faithful care
and our common hope and love.

We will respond to your call
as did our brother Jesus Christ.
He is a road in our wilderness,
water in our desert,
and a light in our darkness.
Christ's mother Mary is our model
of stability, of commitment.
We join with the entire Family of Mary
in seeking to live
in faith despite uncertainty,
in hope despite evil,
in pondering despite distraction,
and in service despite fear.

Your Spirit has breathed life into creation and
guided your people to a New Land.
She has proclaimed Christ to the world
and inspired our disciples.
Send her to guide us so that
we may see your Kingdom
and live out our promises
in our own lives
and in this community
especially during the coming year
and for years to come.

Amen.

Vow Prayer written 1985.

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Steering Committee

The Steering Committee has ultimate responsibility for the direction and decisions made within the State Community. It has the responsibility and discretion to:

1. determine which issues need to be considered by the entire State Community and which issues can be handled by the Steering Committee;
2. work through sufficiently and clarify issues that are to be presented to the entire State Community so that in most cases decisions can be made at one general meeting. Steering Committee decisions are subject to review by the entire State Community.
3. review the COMMON RULE periodically and set up methods to revise or amend it as such action seems needed.

The above mentioned decision-making role of the Steering Committee requires that it maintain fairly close contact with State Community members in order to be sensitive to what issues need to be dealt with and whether the Steering Committee or the entire Community should consider and resolve these issues. State members must also be willing to see certain questions through to their resolution when being considered by the entire State Community.

Composition of the Steering Committee

Coordinator
Head of Spiritual Life
Head of Recruitment/Hospitality
Head of Instruction
Moderator (member of the Society of Mary or Daughters of Mary, *ex officio*, non-voting)

Election of Steering Committees

Steering Committee members should be elected on the basis of who can best fulfill, in terms of time and talent, the responsibilities of the Steering Committee and the individual office.

Two (or three) members will be elected to the Steering Committee at each fall meeting. Their terms will be for three years. The Coordinator and Head of Recruitment are elected the same year and the Heads of Spiritual Life and Instruction are elected the next year. The third year of the cycle there are no elections.

All members of the State Community are eligible for each office unless after serious reflection they disqualify themselves.

Policies and Procedures of the State Community

Procedures to be followed in order to determine two candidates for each election are:

- Process begins 3 months before the fall retreat
 - 1 month to discern your own availability

 - 1 month to nominate self or another
 - Everyone is invited to nominate a candidate
 - A description of why you chose a person should be included
 - A deadline to submit nominations will be provided
 - The members with two or three highest number of votes for each office will be the nominees
 - Those members will be contacted and asked to discern if they accept the call to serve the community. If they discern that they cannot accept the call at this time, the persons with the next highest number of votes will be contacted.

 - 1 month to vote
 - Once nominees have been selected, each community member votes via e-mail to Moderator or designated person to assure confidentiality
 - Person receiving the most votes will be commission at the following retreat

Each office may be held for two consecutive three year terms. If an officer is open to running a second term, it is assumed he/she is already nominated.

Responsibilities of the Steering Committee Members

Coordinator:

- conducts all meetings of the State Community;
- convenes and chairs meetings of the Steering Committee;
- maintains communications within the State Community by regular reports to the members;
- encourages cohesiveness and unity within the State Community through informal contacts with members;
- acts as the formal representative of the State Community to those outside the community;
- seeks ways to foster sharing and interdependence with other branches of the Family of Mary.

Policies and Procedures of the State Community

Head of Instruction:

- assists members and the Community as a body in relating the current situation of the culture and of the Church to our efforts in evangelization and personal development;
- assists members and the Community as a body in looking at what the church and the Family of Mary are being called to at the present time;
- shares with Moderator the responsibility to maintain awareness within the State Community of our Marianist heritage.

Head of Spiritual Life:

- coordinates the semi-annual retreats;
- selects pertinent themes for the retreats which reflect the needs of members;
- is responsible for the ongoing development of the State Community vow, its ceremony, and meaning;
- assists members in developing a rule of life through providing adequate retreat time and resources;
- provides resources for members in the area of spiritual development.

Head of Recruitment/Hospitality

- coordinates the movement of new members into the State Community by keeping in touch with the recruiter, informing the Steering Committee of new persons expected at upcoming retreats, and by taking whatever steps necessary to increase the welcome of new members;
- develops appropriate policy regarding membership;
- provides instruction to members regarding recruitment;
- develops and produces, in conjunction with the head of Spiritual Life, ceremonies and practices appropriate to the admission of new members;
- in cooperation with the Marianist Communities Liaison, conducts appropriate communications regarding recruitment with similar communities within the Family of Mary.

Spiritual Companion

- serves as liaison with the religious institutes of the Family of Mary;
- provides assistance in planning of retreats;
- maintains an awareness within the State Community of our Marianist heritage;
- calls resources within the Family of Mary to the attention of members.

State Community Membership

State Community members are those who have taken the vow described in the COMMON RULE and expressed a willingness to work out and embrace the elements and spirit of the COMMON RULE. State members also attend the semi-annual retreats.

Recruitment/Hospitality

Guidelines for recruitment include:

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1. An outward direction and attentiveness to God's activity outside this Community or local and regional communities;
2. Recruitment to the Community and its mission, with the understanding that each new member, through his or her faith, will in some way re-form in part our Community and mission;
3. Ongoing attention with the State Community to the recognized internal obstacles to recruitment, particularly aimed at breaking down any cliquishness that might exist.

Procedures for the admission of new members:

1. Prospective members should only be introduced to the State Community after having some acquaintance with the State vocation. A State member working with a prospective member should establish contact with the Head of Recruitment.
 - have an initial conversation/review of status and interest
 - Head of Recruitment sends new person the State booklet
 - Head of Recruitment assigns a mentor/contact member from the State
2. New person must attend at least 2 State retreats for experience of the community. When prospective members attend their first retreat, the vow should not be taken. At that retreat, the State Community should acknowledge the prospective member by welcoming him or her at the beginning of the retreat and exchanging introductions.
3. New person is encouraged to seek out additional Marianist resources, especially the on-line courses (State may even pay for the courses.)
4. Mentor and new member have final conversations with the head of Recruitment
5. New member and head of Recruitment mutually agree to proceed with vow taking at the next State retreat

Vow of Stability

We renew the vow once a year at the fall retreat with celebration and solemnity. Those unable to attend the fall retreat renew their vow at the spring gathering.

As a community, we follow the following principles regarding the vow ceremony.

1. Eucharistic - The vow in its most profound sense is an amplification of our baptismal commitments. Since the Eucharist is the place where we celebrate our baptism into Christ, it makes sense to have our vow ceremony within the Eucharistic celebration.

Policies and Procedures of the State Community

2. Response to the Word of God - Basically, our vow is a response to the Word. Our call to faith is a response to a word spoken to us by our Creator; our faith is fostered and supported through the collective words of the community, both verbal and non-verbal. We know that in the Eucharist there is an intimate connection between the Word and the Eucharistic celebration—so intimate that the Constitution on the Liturgy states that the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist cannot be separated either in time or place. Thus, the vow would naturally take place after the homily or even replace it.
3. Expression of group identity:
 - a. lighting of individual candles from central candle;
 - b. singing of Magnificat or other Marian song;
 - c. recitation together of the Vow Prayer of the State Community.
4. State of Vow - A certain flexibility should be maintained to allow for individual expression. Since there is a common sense that the vow expresses an intention of perseverance or stability in regard to the Family of Mary, simple statements such as “Loving God, I commit myself to you in the spirit of Mary . . .” or a prayer expressing the same sentiment to which the community responds ‘Amen’ seem to be the most normal expressions.

Retreats

These are held semi-annually (Spring and Fall) with the Head of Spiritual Life being responsible for planning them. In order to emphasize the retreat aspect, we limit our business discussions to a couple hours at the end of Retreat. The vow is renewed only once a year at the fall retreat.

Visitations

If a member is temporarily unable to attend retreats because of finances, distance, or unusual circumstances, the following policies have been adopted:

1. The State Community will reimburse members for:
 - a. travel expenses, if they are for some reason unable to drive to the retreats;
 - b. retreat expenses, if they are not able to afford those costs.
2. When a member is temporarily unable to attend retreats regularly, a member of the Steering Committee will assume responsibility for maintaining contact with them via letter, phone, tape, etc. Such a liaison should begin only after the Steering Committee has approached the individual to see if he or she feels the need for such contact, how contact could best be handled, who would be the best contact person, etc.
3. Within the context of Item 2, the State Community is willing, if necessary, to reimburse travel expenses for periodic visits between the two people.

Policies and Procedures of the State Community

Finances

In regard to finances, one member of the State Community with financial expertise handles money matters and reports both to the Steering Committee and the State Community. The report includes a financial report for the past year, a projected budget for the coming year, and a suggested level of contribution during the coming year. That person is in charge of the State Community checking account. Each member of the State is asked to make an annual contribution. At the present time, the suggested level of contributions is 1.25% of gross income, with no additional charge for attendance at semi-annual retreats.

Should the Steering Committee members be required to travel on State business they are reimbursed for their travel expense on the basis of \$0.25 per mile for auto travel and full cost (economy rate) for public transportation.

For all resource people at our retreats, we will pay travel expenses on the same basis as for Steering Committee members. Because of the tradition of service among members of the Family of Mary, we will not give a stipend to Family of Mary members who serve as resource people. We will cover all housing expense.

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Policies and Procedures of the State Community