

## SPIRIT OF SARAGOSSA

### Marianist Accompaniment "Do whatever He tells you"

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## I. Some general considerations

### 1. What is accompaniment?

- A ministry, since it is placed in fraternal service to a sister/brother, to be her/his companion on the journey. **What journey?** The one who leads us to more conformity to Jesus Christ.
- It is a journey undertaken in a special way during the time of the "Spirit of Saragossa" spiritual exercises, and which has to continue afterwards: it is a process that has begun, not ended (no matter how good the exercises may be). The sister/brother who continues the accompaniment may be a different sister/brother without any problem.
- A mystery, since life itself is a mystery. It is a mystery that is revealed little by little as one becomes aware and takes responsibility before it. Many times, we simply remain quite before the mystery.
- Father Chaminade wanted to counsel men and women who would take their Christian life seriously – responsibly, "he sought to illumine those he was directing with solid criteria of faith and love" (Emilio Cárdenas – Itinerario mariano de Guillermo José Chaminade Misionero de María – p. 206). Faith and love, two important aspects which we will develop later when we examine what is particular to Marianist accompaniment.

### 2. Spiritual accompaniment

**What is it?** It is participation in a process of human-Christian and Marianist—growth, emphasizing the dimension proper to faith and which seeks to make us open to looking for and finding the will of God in and for our life.

#### **Therefore, accompaniment must keep in mind**

- That this is a process of accompaniment- a **journey of human progress** (dynamics).
- That it is a spiritual accompaniment - **a journey of faith**.
- That it considers the ascetic and moral progress of the person accompanied.
- To seek - to find - and to desire God's will for one's own life.
- To attain conformity to Jesus Christ - **Marianist journey**.

### **Accompaniment must favor:**

- Strengthening the person and his/her spiritual experience through:
  - A lifestyle that confirms and strengthens his/her fundamental choice (i.e. community life – mission).
    - **What is my fundamental choice? Does my response define my life?**
- A context that allows integration of the faith life and of self-surrender.
  - Discerning spaces that allow a total and honest encounter with God. Discerning the choices made day to day. It is necessary to be clear about one's own motives.
- A vital context of commitment, which would bind him/her to the poor, to the needy in our world. Covering the journey of the Incarnation, of lowliness, and trust.
- A context allowing a commitment with my present. It is in this history where God gifts me with his grace. To be able to choose what will lead me to the fulfillment of his will.
- A context enabling us for surrender through love (John 13:1). This is about developing a healthy affectivity allowing us to recognize-welcome the daily love of God. Affectivity: Relationship of affection with God – self- giving to others --- self-acceptance.
- A context allowing us free choices. Making decisions, assuming responsibility and controlling vital processes. Assuming a healthy autonomy and real commitment in freedom.

## **II. Accompaniment dynamics**

### **1. The person – sister or brother**

Who is at an important time of his/her life, and wants to journey in surrender in his/her Marianist religious life.

### **Some conditions for the sister or brother:**

- **Human – psychological maturity:** integration – autonomy of his/her own life. Must have a level of affective and vital unity and be established in his/her integrating center (integrated affections); cannot be dissociated from other

dimensions or aspects of our life. Integration will come about in the measure in which a journey of personal knowledge has been done (personal – family history, etc.). We love – accept what we know.

- **Honesty – spiritual availability**: through a fundamental option to seek and do the will of God. With right intention and the capacity to clearly and honestly say to oneself what is desired in accompaniment (**FMI Rule of Life I.12; SM Rule of Life 40: “the truth...” (John 8:32)**).
- **Openness to grace**: everything depends on God (All for God – Adele’s Letters no. 306. 3). Spiritual experience that happens in the encounter between grace and our freedom “...it sets you free” (**John 8:32**).
- **Docility to the Spirit accompanied / or by Mary**: let ourselves be formed by Her, as she did with Jesus. To place ourselves in her arms (filial dimension) (**John 19:26-27**).
- **Capacity to persevere**: inner fortitude. Perseverance in what we want. “I will do more serious and solid reflection to encourage myself to perseverance; I will say to myself: the motives that have impelled me to give myself to God, to return to God...” (**Retreat Notes III – no. 475ff**).

## 2. The Spiritual experience

To accompany means to second what the Spirit is giving rise to in each one. It is entering in dialog with God through our reality (incarnated – desired – assumed). God has called us from here.

### ▪ **What is the principle?**

Love – for God so loved ... (John 1:14).

### ▪ **The experience of goodness – mercy – compassion**

The merciful God who loves us freely. We are moved when we know we are loved. Love invites to a new life – commitment (**Luke 1:50**).

### ▪ **Knowledge of Jesus Christ to reach conformity with Jesus Christ**

To share the life and the mission of Jesus Christ. To follow Jesus Christ in order to live the Paschal Mystery. It is an experience that predisposes us for a dynamic of authentic following (**Luke 2:44ff**).

▪ **Spiritual discernment**

It assumes a spiral of growth in clarity – depth and availability for whatever He may want (**Luke 2:25ff**).

▪ **The inner spirit**

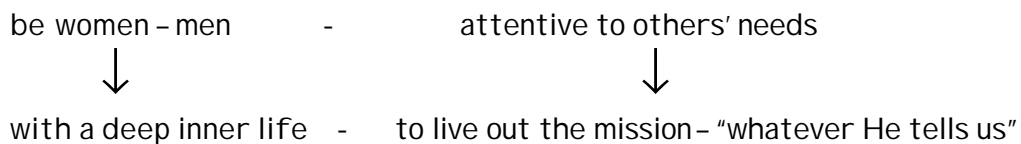
“The spirit of the children of Mary is an interior spirit. In this community the religious makes of his soul a temple of God. He installs an altar there on which he sacrifices his will. He is constantly conscious of the presence of God, and converses gently and familiarly with him, because God has taken up his abode within him. His heart is a sanctuary dedicated to Mary, a chapel from which fervent prayers rise to her. He also invokes St. Joseph and has recourse to him in his troubles. The spirit of the Institute is the spirit of Mary; this explains everything. If you are children of Mary, imitate Mary” (**Marian Writings II - no. 765 - pp 304-305**).

▪ **The manifestation of the inner spirit**

“The interior spirit has a vigorous exterior manifestation, since it is a road that comes out into a total and radical commitment to God to spread the faith” (**Emilio Cárdenas - Itinerario... - p. 212**).

**3. Interior looking and listening - inner life - “Do whatever He tells you”**

It is through this nearness – contemplation of Jesus Christ that the Virgin Mary begins in our life, which predisposes us to do whatever He tells us. We risk ourselves to:



**From here we resolve to:**

- Order our whole life and do the will of God. To place our life, putting the necessary means for God to accomplish his will in us. To be at his service.
- Strengthen the inner examination (**Ephesians 3:16**). To recognize personal tendencies. A look transformed and transfigured by the feelings arising from the heart of Jesus. To recognize in the present that which offers hope – future. “It is essential, therefore, that we acquire the interior spirit. By

what means? There are three. The first, to copy the traits of Jesus Christ. The second, to train ourselves to virtue by following the example of the august Mary. The third, to work at our salvation following the rules of the Institute of Mary, that is, the evangelical counsels" (**Marian Writings II - no. 766 - p. 305**).

- To be affected, moved by the reality of the world (Mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption).
- To be conscious of our own frailty and of our radical dependence on God and on our brothers or sisters (Congregation).
- **Interior... looking ... listening**  
"... to look at the realities with the very eyes of God" (**FMI Rule of Life I.5; SM Rule of Life 4**).

It is necessary:

- **To Know**

Our own reality – human history. It opens us to others, in our affections. It allows us to know our own strengths. It is about knowledge of our own reality with its strengths and weaknesses. A critical and hopeful look. Furthermore, it is an inner knowledge of Jesus Christ letting ourselves be taken from the deepest part of our being.

- **To Listen**

Within ourselves to recognize the movements of the Spirit. To open the windows to the reality that surrounds us.

- **To contemplate - interiorly**

A deep look that goes beyond appearances "... the essential is invisible to the eyes... we can only see well through the heart..." (The Little Prince). It is stopping to see God, to recognize his presence and welcome his invitation. As well as what is absent and everything that contradicts our life. It is contemplation through the heart of God. It is letting ourselves be accompanied by Mary, who meditates, keeps, contemplates in her heart everything that happens.

- **To discern and to choose**

Through the inner freedom that arises from recognizing God and everything that leads to Him as the only absolute. To discern is to look for

that which God asks of us in our life “the call... discerned in the Holy Spirit...” **FMI Rule of Life I. 10)** “... to remain vigilant for the criteria...” **(SM Rule of Life 11)**. To do the will of God in our particular life.

▪ **To celebrate**

With a grateful heart for what God has given us. Life is a gift where happiness is inscribed. “Happiness is the sum and compendium of an authentic life. Someone may be broken in half, like a channel, destroyed in his most important areas; but if he has been consistent, if he has been true to himself, his life will exude harmony. Happiness does not depend on reality, rather on one’s perception of reality, on the revision of life’s plan, on a tableau summarizing what has been done in relation to what has been planned” **(Enrique Rojas - La ilusión de vivir - instrucciones para navegar hacia la felicidad - The Enthusiasm for Living - Instructions to navigate toward happiness - p. 23)**.

**4. Docility to the Holy Spirit**

“To live is to have within an interior principle of movement. To live spiritually is to have only the Holy Spirit as the interior principle of movement, to act only moved by the Spirit of Jesus, to only live by his Spirit, making any other movement cease...” **(Retreat Notes II - No. 109)**.

“To live the spirit of Jesus Christ is to experience in oneself the feelings of Christ” **(Retreat Notes II - No. 133)**.

The gift of the Spirit - that is revealed - is shown in **Luke 10:21-22** “Jesus was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit and said...”

**In order to:**

- Praise - bless God the Creator of everything - heaven and earth - what we aspire to - “heaven” and our reality “earth.”
- Who reveals to women - men his plan of love. What was hidden, is manifested, made known.
- Those who have a humble heart - trusting - open - available.
- To whom God reveals his will.
- That they would know his Son.

**“Reasons to let ourselves be led by the Spirit of Christ:**

- His goodness in communicating it to us.
- The merciful wisdom of the Holy Spirit who want to lead us.
- The great advantages resulting from this” **(Retreat Notes II - No. 13)**.

### **Importance of:**

Significant listening through what a brother or sister is able to express and which allows to create:

- An atmosphere where the sister or brother may feel welcome.
- That allows him/her to get in touch with his/her feelings – what is lived internally. What do you feel? (interior world).
- With a way of listening that opens up frontiers – with clarity regarding the goals of accompaniment.
- With signs – that would show me which way or how am I walking – more nearly to the Lord?

“The spiritual director ... leads those he directs in the Holy Spirit with a maternal and Marian sense”(Emilio Cárdenas – **Itinerario ... p. 422**).

### **5. To face difficulties – interior and exterior obstacles**

- Mystery of the Incarnation: ourselves. God incarnate in our history who invites us to recognize him in this history.
- Vital context that would allow us to experience God. Framework of our significant experiences and condition of possibility: means for strengthening our own life.
- Life – community – mission. Place of confirmation for our experience of God. It is achieved in the intimacy of the experience of God and is updated in daily life, where we are and where we are sent.
- Place of realization for the grace received. To be moved and let ourselves be converted in light of the Gospel values, letting them question us as the ultimate and definitive criteria.

### **6. On the journey with Mary through our alliance**

“Mary is the one who presents the praying person before God”(Emilio Cárdenas – **Itinerario ... – p. 363**).

- We yield to her motherly tenderness that She may cooperate with the action of the Holy Spirit in us and we may be formed in the image of her firstborn Son (**FMI Rule of Life I.8**).

- “The Virgin Mary conceived us in Nazareth (Annunciation) and she gave us birth at Calvary.”
- She strengthens us in our inner spirit through a life of prayer. Living out her virtues of humility and simplicity.  
“We go to Jesus only through Mary, just as Jesus came to us through Mary. Every time we seek the glory of God, let it be through Mary; it is impossible to attain the one without the other. To find Jesus we must look for Mary” (**Marian Writings – No. 783 – p. 310**).

### **III. Some particular considerations**

Starting from what should be fundamental for us and directing our whole life.

We find the basis in the words that Mary directs to the servants at the Wedding of Cana – “Do whatever He tells you” (**John 2:5**)

Why? Because this summarizes for us what should be our constant search for the will of God in and for our lives. To do what He tells us assumes a process developed below.

#### **1. Reality: personal – social – cultural – religious etc.**

- **It happens within time (1)**

“Three days later...” Our beginning of accompaniment has a beginning and an end. Why worry about the beginning? Because it gives us a glimpse of what is there in the background of the sister or brother. She or he arrives with many things no matter how much we insist that they must arrive relaxed. We bring a backpack from which we will gradually take out things in time. This will bring us peace. Because the Mother of Jesus is there, in life, in my own life.

- **Facing life or situations in life (2)**

A wedding that speaks to us of love, of realization of a plan that no longer wants to be personal but rather with others. It is an I – that goes out to meet with a You and form an Us. It speaks to us of preparations. A wedding is not planned from one day to the next, it requires time. Like love; mature love takes time to develop – grow – be fruitful. This wedding is under the eyes of Jesus (Hope).

A wedding that is also a definitive surrender to the Lord. It is a covenant sealed in love. It is definitive consecration.

▪ **Where something is finished (3) to begin something new**

The wine prepared for the wedding is finished; they had no more to continue celebrating – toasting. There are times in one's own life when the wine is finished. A 30-day retreat will have us taking the journey of life to also discover when the wine is gone and life becomes boring, meaningless, without joy. There was nothing more in the person and his arms fell. But we know well that they only need to lift our eyes – our heart – to find the One who brings back our hope. Jesus is there (this is the daily experience of the life of a religious) contemplating life. It lets us begin new journeys – experiences to know that we can – but that we also need others. We finish something to begin something new.

▪ **Other persons intervene: Jesus and Mary – where there are questions and answers (4)**

- Mary - they have no wine
- Jesus - woman why do you get into my business
- my hour has not yet come

Mary simply declares a reality. She is concerned about the young newlyweds. Why should she not speak? She knows what to say. She is direct, without ambiguities. She knows what happens when something is lacking. She knows when the wine is all gone in each one of her children. She knows us – loves us. But before this reality Mary senses that it is not a matter of continuing to provide the same wine, she could have gotten this. It is the appropriate occasion in the “context of love”- of a wedding, where a new wine is necessary. It is the step of total – definitive – surrender – of belonging – which awakens the Mother's heart.

Jesus responds from the point of view of his vocation – how to interfere in the business – the time – of the Father? The hour of Jesus is the time of the Father. Mary knows how to wait and act with trust. She knows well how God acts, “nothing is impossible with God.”

**2. To offer a new way – “Do whatever He tells you” (5)**

And God acts when he sees the heart open to whatever He wants. Mary's words are clear: “Do whatever He tells you”; and she can say this appropriately, because she has listened to the Son earlier. She knows and recognizes the voice of Jesus and knows what way to follow “I know in whom I have put my trust...”

▪ **A Reality that is taken – is not unknown (water jars) (6)**

We journey through our reality even when it is complex. A retreat is a time of special grace. It allows us to look at our history with all its complexities and also in peace. It is not a cold, distant look. It is a loving look.

▪ **To fill something that was empty (7)**

We have discovered the emptiness because we have found something that truly fills and fulfills life. There is a need for this dimension to realize that there is nothing more and that we need something to give us what is lacking. The emptiness is there to be filled.

▪ **To bring out – show what is new (8)**

Oftentimes we return and will return to the same reality; but what we carry inside is something else, and it is not to be hidden, nor is it to boast about, but simply to share it.

▪ **Novelty of what happens – appears to be new (9)**

Which is not a human accomplishment, but rather a manifestation of God. It cannot be explained humanly. We can recognize it when we find its meaning in something beyond ourselves.

▪ **Recognizing differences (10)**

What was before and what is now. The past and the present. The Lord offers us the possibility to combine our history in a different way. He is there, present in history – in my own feast to show me the way. He gives me the freedom to choose – to recognize – to love.

▪ **Commitment – life of faith (11)**

Life will not be the same. I can look with trust / or because I know whom I have trusted. I know the One whose presence transforms the daily routine into something resplendent. It is a presence that transforms and transfigures the present into a life of faith. A journey undertaken with others and mainly accompanied by Mary. She awakens us to the miracle of believing.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

Accompaniment is simply the invitation to journey. A journey in our own history as older sisters or brothers (age is not the main thing), that is, with more years of religious life, maintaining enthusiasm for the Marianist life and working for its fruitfulness. For each one of us this journey has been the validation of our vocation, of being available to what the Lord tells us to do.

He is the one who continues to invite us, to place us beside our brothers/sisters to journey together. Not to repeat our journey, but to learn to discover their own journey. We are witnesses to the presence of God in the life of our brothers/sisters. What other gift could we hope for? Therefore, we make ourselves available, knowing that Mary already started the journey in each one of her sons and daughters.

Teresa de Jesús Castro - fmi