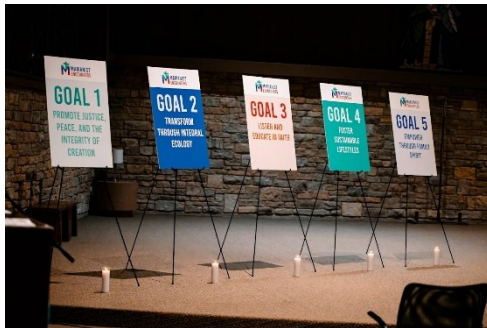


The Marianist Encounters Conference, October 2024

The Marianist Encounters Conference was held from October 3 to 6, 2024, at Bergamo Center, Mount St. John, in Dayton, Ohio, and was attended by over 70 participants. Various members of the Marianist Family contributed to the conference as presenters, Marianist ministries site coordinators, Mount St. John tour guides, and more. The entire Marianist Family represented the conference well, including Ministry leads, faculty and staff from Marianist schools and universities, and students from Marianist Universities. The participants also included directors of Marianist Retreat centers, including Marianist Religious and Lay members.



On the first day, Thursday, Oct. 3, we began with a welcome address by Marianist Encounters co-chairs Sr. Leanne Jablonski, FMI, and Bro. Jesse O’Neill, SM, in the Roncalli Assembly Chapel. This was followed by an Opening Prayer service led by Bro. Steve O’Neil, SM, member of the Marianist Family Encounters Project Coordinating team. After a brief introduction to Marianist Encounters and the meaning of “Encounter” in Pope Francis’ message to the Church today, Bro. Steve shared a slideshow with images of inspiring Marianist Encounters stories from throughout the Marianist Family – its schools, universities, retreat centers, institutions, lay communities, etc. The images were shared from the Marianist Encounters website, which promotes ecology and education within the Marianist Family. All participants were encouraged to bring a symbol related to their Marianist ministry and its relation to Marianist Encounters’ goals. The beautiful opening prayer service ended with an evening candlelight procession towards Our Lady of Lourdes grotto near Bergamo Center.





The second day, October 4, was the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. The day began with a prayer service followed by site visits to five Marianist Ministries: *Chaminade-Julienne High School Social Justice Capstone Project and Sr. Dorothy Stang Symposium*; *Caring for Watersheds: University of Dayton River Stewards & Citizen Science Engagement through Water Quality Monitoring*; *Sustainability as a Vocation at University of Dayton Hanley Sustainability Institute (HSI)*; *Act Local: Anti-Human Trafficking, Human Rights, and Justice Work in Dayton* at the Human Rights Center at UD; and *Food is Love: Food Security education* at the Mission of Mary urban farm in East Dayton.



Three workshop sessions were held across two days, with participants choosing from three different options in each session. The workshops covered a wide range of topics, from teaching ecological education and social justice to children and students, understanding the merits and challenges of going solar for homeowners and institutions, understanding the key elements of contemporary nature-based spirituality inspired by Father Chaminade, and understanding the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs.



In the afternoon, there were a range of eight types of Mount St. John tours: a tour to the Mount St. John Nature Preserve, a Native plants landscape tour, a Labyrinth Autumn Meditation walk, a tour of NACMS, a Solar Energy tour of Mount St. John, an Adaptation and Change Landscape walk, a Meditation and Yoga in Nature, and Self-guided prayer experiences.



The second day ended with the opening plenary session with Maureen O'Rourke, Bro. Steve Glodek, SM, and Sr. Nicole Trahan, FMI, representing the three branches of the Marianist Family – Laity, Marianist Brothers, and Marianist Sisters. The session focused on the Marianist Charism with its gifts and challenges in encountering the cry of the poor, the earth, and the youth today. We may face challenges caring for our common home while making lifestyle and ecological changes. Yet, we remember Father Chaminade's words of being a spectacle of saints through our Marianist Charism. Throughout the conference, there were table displays from around seven Marianist institutions, such as IMRI - International Marian Research Institute, Marian Library, NACMS, AMU - Association of Marianist Universities, Marianist Pulse, MEEC, MSJC, and the Integral Ecology team of MSJC and MEEC, including a table from Pax Christi.



On the third day, October 5, after prayer, the keynote speaker, Vincent Miller, Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology & Culture at the University of Dayton, shared his presentation on Integral Ecology in which Pope Francis' Laudato Si' is an invitation to transform the mind and heart. Dr. Miller presented Mary as the model of accompaniment and Seat of Wisdom in our journey of transformation through Laudato Si' in the Church. He also presented the notion of hope in one of our present-day ecological crises of wildfires, where there is hope even after a devastating wildfire. The evening saw the second keynote speaker, Andrés Novela, Campus Minister at Monsignor Edward Pace High School, Miami, Florida, share his experience of encountering God in the people of Haiti through his journey of justice in understanding and fostering meaningful connections with the Haitian community. His journey of transformation included experiencing first-hand coffee brewing through the hands of local Haitian women. Andrés also supports the work of the COCANO cooperative in Haiti, which fosters global solidarity and sustainable development. The evening session also included a Saturday Vigil Mass led by Fr. Roland Bunda from the Honolulu Marianist Community in Hawaii.



The final day saw an introspective session led by Rob Brodrick, National Director of MLCNA, focusing on the Marianist Encounters goals and key takeaways from the conference. Bro. Jesse O'Neill, SM, led the final blessing session with a reflective prayer on the four elements of nature – Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water. The participants were invited to choose one of the four elements as a source of spiritual transformation and blessing for our common home.

The prayers and music for the entire conference were led by Scott Paeplow, Director of the Vocal Music program at Moeller High School, Cincinnati. Kelly Welling was the photographer for the conference. Brian

Reavey was the MC of the conference. Many participants appreciated the conference and the insights they gained from it.

Click here to view the photos of the entire conference: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/t8EZn5Uz6oiptxUh7>