



“Grow together in Christ to make a difference” 2013 – 2014 school theme, Company of Mary schools in the United States

Each year, towards the end of August, the Company of Mary schools of the U.S. Province come together for a day of input, camaraderie and prayer to begin the new school year. The most recent event took place, August 19th at the Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac School, Tustin site.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Anthony Sabatino, director of Catholic School leadership training at Loyola University, Los Angeles. Dr. Sabatino came to know the Company of Mary in the U. S. when he assisted in the evaluation process of the schools that took place 2012 – 2013 in preparation for the General Assembly. At the Company of Mary Ministry Day, August 19th, he spoke on *“Educational Principles of a Company of Mary institution; its mandate to evangelize in a complex and challenging social reality.”* His goal was to try to help us understand the reality of integrating **faith** and **professional practice** for Catholic school educators in response to the complex challenges facing the people we serve; to understand the reality of how **mission, vision,** and desired **outcomes** can lead to an **action plan** to evangelize our life and the lives of others. As member of a Jesuit educational institutions, Dr. Sabatino drew significant parallels with Ignatian spirituality.

An important part of Company of Mary Ministry Day is to present the school theme for the upcoming academic year. This year’s theme is: *“Grow together in Christ to make a difference.”* The theme is traditionally put into song and a video presentation by Dr. Roger Minkle, member of the Administrative Team of St. Jeanne’s in Tustin.

As we continue to take greater advantage of our international network, this year’s drawing was done by Rodrigo Espinosa, a young teacher from the Company of Mary school in Logroño, Spain. Rodrigo and Cintia Blasco spent a month at Divine Providence Pre-school and Kindergarten during the month of July volunteering their services in the classroom, in methodology workshops for teachers, painting murals and brushing up on their English. They gifted us with creating an image for the 2013 -2014 year theme that gave a most authentic visual expression in a true Company of Mary spirit. We are most grateful for their talent, dedication and generosity.

The day began with the celebration of the Eucharist by Fr. Jerry Horan, Vicar of Religious Education for the Diocese of Orange. At the end of Mass, three young women who participated in the Company of Mary World Youth Day program together with Armando Cervantes, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the diocese shared their experience and a message for the teachers of our schools. The WYD participants highlighted the impact of their experience with the children at Cejole. The four day silent retreat was a blessing and a challenge, and stretched them to grow more deeply in their personal prayer, a prayer that helps them contemplate their lives and the work of the Lord in them and in all. It goes without saying that their encounter with the Pope Francis in Rio was an unforgettable life-changing experience. They came home inspired and fortified to be disciple-missionaries.

The initiation of an Inter-school structure was introduced. The areas that will be addressed this coming year are: 1.) the continuation of formation on the educational charism of the Order for teachers, staff and parents; 2.) follow-up on the 2012 Company of Mary ministries’ evaluation; 3.) the coordination of pedagogical principles and curriculum program; 4.) assistance in policies and procedures for pre-schools; 5.) the coordination of Company of Mary foreign student exchange; 6.) the coordination of activities deriving from the Educational Project and education in solidarity.

The day concluded with a missioning ritual of the administrative teams, teachers and staff of each school. Particular mention was made of the renewed intention of La Purisima Parish school to join the Company of Mary network of schools. The recently named principal of La Purisima, Annette Zaleski, together with her faculty have expressed their desire to receive formation in the educational project and participate in all of Company of Mary activities. This is embraced by all as a, "coming home."

We begin one more school year, invited to live our theme of growing together ever more deeply in a relationship with the Lord. Our giving life to these words will help us be and inspire our students to be agents of transformation in our world, taking on the values of the Kingdom and making them present in our various realities.

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