

# Marian Spirituality: Its Bases and Life Expressions in the Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae (CICM) and its Missionaries

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90300298>

Received: 01 March 2025; Accepted: 15 March 2025; Published: 15 April 2025

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the nature and characteristics of Marian Spirituality in the context of the Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae (CICM). Mary played an indispensable role in the salvation of humanity, and the impact of such a role could be observed in Marian devotions, rites, and celebrations in the church and families that transformed many lives. Marian spirituality, however, is always understood in a particular circumstance along the charism of a certain group or community. The CICM congregation inspired by Mary has been immensely engaged in diverse missionary work in the Philippines for more than a century, yet an explicit articulation of what Marian Spirituality at the core of CICM is wanting. Thus, this research is bent on laying and expressing what Marian spirituality is all about through a reflective interaction between and among the CICM missionaries. The results are meant to revisit, review, and refocus Marian Spirituality among CICM institutions and its implications for their missions. Findings show that doing such would lead back to the scriptures and doctrines of the church and the life practices of Marian devotees. Marian Spirituality then takes its root from the life of Mary in the scriptures. Mary is not only perceived as pious, obedient, and passive but also actively involved and exhibited unrelenting initiative and willingness to serve and walk the distance with anyone. This is the Marian spirituality that has taken life meaningfully in the missionary charism of the CICM.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Mariology, Misson, Missionary Charism, Marian Spirituality

## INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines and any other Christian country, one cannot deny that devotion to Mary, the Mother of Christ, has taken many forms. We have devotions to the Scapular and the devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. What is common to these devotions is that they involve the use of external and visible signs to show an inner connection [1]. These different devotions surely influenced the lives of every devotee. The Catholic Church itself must respond not only to such devotions but also to recognize the importance of Mary in salvation history.

The ecclesiastical titles given by the Catholic Church to Mary are signs of the Church's deep reverence for Mary as the Mother of Christ (Theotokos). If one is to browse the Church or Ecclesiastical Calendar, one may notice many memorial days [2] for the Blessed Virgin Mother. These different celebrations are again proof of the very important place or position of Mary in every Catholic Christian's life.

In fact, because of the many values that Mary herself had exemplified during her life and because of people's devotion to her, many people have taken the name Mary or Maria, and many establishments have taken a Marian name like St. Mary's Hospital, a town named St. Mary, St. Mary's boarding house, St. Mary's School or Academy and many others. Religious Congregations were also formed because of the inspiration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and other religious Congregations have taken her as their model and inspiration like the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) and the Order of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel otherwise known as the Carmelites.

The spiritual life of Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, has indeed influenced the lives of millions. James B. Reuter, S.J. [3] recounted how Mama Mary protected his own family, his vocation, his coming to the Philippines as a Jesuit missionary, and how Mama Mary touched, changed, and transformed the lives of many people he encountered.

Jaime L. Cardinal Sin [4] emphasized the collective devotion of Filipinos to the Blessed Virgin Mary, where he alluded to the name Juan Dela Cruz as John of the Cross, the Saint who played an important role in the life of Saint Therese of Avila. The late Cardinal encouraged the reinvigoration of Filipino devotion to the Blessed Virgin during times of turmoil and disbelief so that people could see the light. He concluded one of the chapters of his book this way "As the Holy Spirit shaped Mary's heart, may our hearts be like hers: hearts given to her Son, hearts given to His saving work, hearts given for the life of the world."

"It is impossible to imagine Christians without Christmas". Mary played a very important role in man's salvation, for Christmas is the "dawn of our salvation". Advent, which culminates at Christmas, is the paschal mystery of man's salvation, and it starts at Christmas, for it is actually the foundation of God's redemptive work. It is the foreshadowing of the salvific mission of Christ, the son of God, where the Blessed Virgin Mother played an important role [5].

However, some seem to feel that a relationship with Mary stands in the way of their relationship with Christ. They seem to think that Mary is unnecessary in their lives and that she detracts from the mediatorship of Christ [6]. But Edward Carter, quoting Karl Rahner, writes, "devotion to Mary is one of the great signs of perseverance." He further says, "Of all the tremendous gifts with which God has blessed us, certainly the gift of the beautiful woman, Mary, is the most precious." He further said that if one does not make any move to relate with Mary in one's life, he becomes poorer spiritually. It could be then inferred that through Mary, one could gain spiritual strength.

But how can spirituality be Marian? Or better, what is Mary's contribution to Christian Spirituality? Among scholars in the Church, there seems to be no common stand on whether there is such a Marian Spirituality. What is clear, however, is that there is a "Marian Aspect" of spirituality [7]. Furthermore, has the view that "Marian spirituality" is a "fundamental expression of Christian faith," or, better, the foundational form of the believer's existence. "Mary's intimate connection with the very center of divine revelation, as mentioned in Lumen Gentium (no. 65), constitutes the foundation for the quasi-congruity of Christian and "Marian spirituality" and justifies it [8]. As observed explicitly elsewhere, the Christian can thus be defined as *esse marianum*, or, to quote a memorable saying by Paul VI, "If we want to be Christians, we have to be Marian, meaning we must recognize the essential, vital and providential relationship which unites Mary to Christ, and which opens the way for us that leads to Him."

This institution was named Saint Mary's University. But what makes it really a Marian University? What makes Saint Mary's University different from other educational institutions? [9] Marian graduates and students are called Marians. But are they really living the kind of life that the Blessed Virgin lived? At this University, Mary is the patroness, the model, but what does it mean to be a Marian? What Marian values, or spirituality must one uphold? Had members of the community and even administrators and employees really understood and instilled in their lives these Marian Virtues?

The researchers believe that one must know what Marian spirituality is before one can intelligently and religiously observe such a thing. Until and unless Marian Spirituality is clearly defined one could hardly

determine and point out who a Marian is. This research aims to lay out and appreciate what Marian Spirituality is all about. It presents Mary's position in the Bible, Church Doctrines and Traditions, and in the CICM Philippine province to show the very foundation of Marian Spirituality.

This research will, therefore, serve as a basis or framework for understanding what Marian culture is all about in the light of a well-defined Marian spirituality. This will also guide this institution in the formulation of objectives in its different and varying programs and projects. This will help every Marian easily identify and relate with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Further, this becomes the model for evaluating each one's values if such coincides and aligns with Marian virtues.

Marian Spirituality could be deduced from the missionary founders of Saint Mary's University, a Higher Educational Institution in the northern part of the Philippines. This research study aimed to elucidate how Marian spirituality was based and expressed in the missionary congregation that established the university for youth education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research employed qualitative approach. Qualitative research is used primarily to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, cultures, or lifestyles. It is used to inform business decisions, policy formation, communication, and research. It utilized data-gathering tools and techniques such as in-depth interviews, content analysis [10], evaluation, the hermeneutics of documents [11], and survey questionnaires.

The respondents for the survey-interview questionnaire were the CICM missionaries retired or active in the mission. Since there are only a few CICM missionaries in Nueva Vizcaya, other CICM missionaries were interviewed, i.e., those living in Baguio City, Manila, and even those assigned abroad while on vacation and those on mission through email. Marian devotees were also among the respondents. The interview included devotees from the different Parishes in Nueva Vizcaya who were under the CICM administration, past and present.

The literature data of this research were primarily taken from the Bible, Encyclicals, Church Publications, and other documents. Moreover, an in-depth interview and questionnaires were utilized to gather information from the respondents about their views and life experiences about the subject matter of this research. The life experiences and responses of the respondents were subjected to qualitative evaluation, analysis, and interpretation, where their views on the matter were drawn.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Mary in the Bible**

“What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines, in turn, its faith in Christ [12].” The opening statement in the Catechism of the Catholic Church regarding the incarnation of Christ through Mary shows the truth that any attempt to know and understand Mary must always be done in the context of Christ Himself. Many scholars agree that there were very few accounts of the life of Mary in the Holy Bible. But if ever there are accounts, historical or ahistorical, such accounts are very important in the life of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

In the fullness of time, God will bring His only begotten Son to the world, but such could not be possible without any preparation. In Gal. 4:4-5 it is written that “when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman ... that we might have the adoption of sons.” The fullness of time had been realized through the announcement of the Angel that she would bear a child. But the initial reaction of Mary was, “How can that be possible? I am a virgin?” the Angel, however, assured her that it was with God's grace that she would

become pregnant. And she replied, “I am the maidservant of the lord, may it happen to me as you have said (Lk 1:26-38).”

Mary’s motherhood of the son of God is further affirmed when she visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant despite being a barren woman. In Lk 1:41-45, Elizabeth said that Mary was the “most blessed of all women and blessed is the Child you will bear.” She was blessed because, from the very start, she had believed in the power of God. She did not doubt the words of the Angel. Mary “knows her nothingness, part as she was of the weak and suffering race,” yet she believed and obeyed. This is expressed in what is called the Magnificat where Mary sang the great canticle (Lk 1:46-55) [13].

Mary is indeed the historical mother of Jesus Christ ... However, in Luke’s visions, Mary is foremost the fulfillment of God’s promise to his people through the prophets. She is Israel, “the highly favored Daughter of Zion,” as the angel addressed her (Lk 1:38). She is the ideal representation of the whole people of God. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church [12], it is written that the Virgin Mary “cooperated through free faith and obedience in human salvation” [14]. She uttered her yes “in the name of all human nature.” And by obedience, she became the new Eve, mother of the living.

The next important Biblical account of the life of Mary is during the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 2:1-7). Joseph and Mary could not find a vacant inn, so Mary had to give birth to Jesus in a manger. Now there were shepherds with whom an Angel announced the birth of the savior who went immediately, and as long as they found the baby, they told what happened to them. “Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about it in her heart” (Lk 2:8-20).

Another event in the life of Jesus where we can find the active role of Mary is during the circumcision of Jesus when he was eight days old as part of Jewish tradition (Lk 2: 21). This is followed by the presentation in the temple as part of the old tradition from the Law of Moses where “Every firstborn shall be dedicated to the Lord (Lk 2: 22-35).” The ensuing event is the loss and finding of Jesus in the temple, where he was found to be with “the Jewish teachers listening to them and asking questions.” Here, Jesus announced to His Mother that He is doing the will of His Father. The Gospel of Luke states that they never understood what he said, but “His mother treasured all these things in her heart (Lk 2: 41-51).” Many scholars would say that the verse in the Gospel will only manifest the close union between the Mother and the Child. Mary knew from the very start who her child was. And she never asked questions about it. She completely dedicated her life to raising the child Jesus as He should be.

The succeeding appearance of Mary was during the public life of Jesus. John’s Gospel sees the story of the wedding at Cana as the beginning of the revelation of the glory of Jesus (Jn 2:1-12). “The wedding feast is a well-known symbol of the messianic days”, where “a wedding on the third day” took place [15]. Furthermore, this event highlighted “on the third day” and “confirms and even heightens the readers’ expectation that a moment of glory is about to come.” In the narrative that specifies Mary’s dialogue: “They have no wine” and “Do whatever He tells you,” Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is specifically noted for the “power of intercession, and they are meant to teach people to pray to Jesus through Mary” [16].

Mary’s “words significantly offer an intriguing portrait of a woman as a leader and catalyst in the mission of Jesus’ life with implications for women empowerment” [17]. Mary sees that the wine has run out, so “acting decisively and confidently, Mary named the need and took the initiative to seek a solution.” “Far from silent, she speaks; far from passive, she acts; far from receptive to the orders of the male, she goes counter to his wishes, finally bringing him along with her; far from yielding to a grievous situation, she takes charge of it, organizing matters to bring about benefit to those in need, including herself.”

Mary, this time, had understood that her relationship with her son was not just biological. Her task from that time on is to follow Jesus and make people follow the Words of Jesus. He writes it beautifully “Mary assumed an evangelizing and missionary function. She believed in Jesus, listened to Him, fulfilled his Words, and asked others to do the same. In conformity with her son’s attitude, she bound herself to Him through faith and tried



to get others to do the same. It was not that Mary had influence over Jesus but, rather, over others to bring them to Jesus” [18].

Pope John Paul II has identified the “Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Church and the Mother in the Church of the home (Murielis Dignitatum).” What is the Pope trying to tell women? And what implication has this for women? This statement of the Pope is rooted in Mary’s fiat, as an example of humility and generous acceptance of the will of God and the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross, comforting the sufferings and drying of tears those in distress because of family difficulties. For the Pope, this is all about temptation that afflicts women yet is necessary to be overcome to remain right with God. Women must learn to submit to the will of God just as Mary submitted herself to be the Theotokos and later watch her Son die on the cross (Jn. 19:25).

### **Mary in Church Doctrines and Traditions**

Mary has been playing a very important role in the life of the church. Such can be observed not only in the past but even today. Mary has become a very influential figure in every Christian (Catholic) life, even in the realm of arts and literature. We can find so many themes portraying the values and characteristics of Mary. Even the Church hierarchy and its leaders have been discussing, clarifying, and promulgating rules and standards on approaching such a basic part of our Christian faith. This is due to the little biblical support that we have about Mary and the lack of historical evidence about Mary herself. “History has no record of Mary of Nazareth except through the documents of faith,” and even such documents are short. She further stated that the fourth Gospel accords her prominence, but such a Gospel is a theological reflection and not a “narrative of historical events” [19].

The Church has been very strong but also very ecumenical when it comes to doctrines about Mary. However, many contemporary theologians could have varied interpretations of the nature or character of Mary, her life and role in man’s salvation history, and the way the faithful look at her as a whole. Today’s challenge is that there seems to be a need to reform our theology about Mary. Many scholars have portrayed Mary as passive, unthinking, and submissive ... among others, but the Gospel of Luke provides a different Mary who is “discerning, active, participative, and responsible” [20].

Today, “theology needs to liberate her from some of the images into which she has been formed.” This is because our statues, pictures, and even our descriptions of Mary “do not represent the strong Jewish woman of Nazareth who answered God’s call.” The portrayal of Mary as “meek, timid, deferential and demure, with eyes downcast, and with resigned expression – an image often held as a model for piety for both men and women” may fringe rather than “challenge the radical living out of the gospel” [19].

The lack of historical evidence about Mary in the Gospels has “left the imagination of Christian devotion entirely unrestrained by information.” Yet despite these circumstances, the basic and foundational teachings of the Church remain the same owing to the vigilance and ecumenical approach in dealing with our belief in Mary, the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of God [19].

The Vatican II’s theologians, fathers, and Pope, and its successors, had been of very great help in clarifying, discussing, and defending the Marian tradition. Thus, the basic doctrines remain. There is still continuity from the past to the present. The sacred Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, as well as ancient tradition, show the role of the Mother of the Savior in the economy of salvation in an ever clearer light and purpose. These earliest documents, as they are read in the Church and are understood in the light of a further and full revelation, bring the figure of the woman, Mother of the Redeemer, into a gradually sharper focus (Vatican II).

The Catholic Church has the following doctrines on Mary: Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, Mother of God (Theotokos), Assumption, Co-Redemtrix, Mediatrix of all Graces, Queen of Heaven, Mary as the faithful Disciple, among others. It is noteworthy that most of these doctrines of the Church emphasized the

very special position of Mary in salvation history, a position that elevates her above the ordinary and natural course of human life.

### **Mary and Popular Devotions**

The Roman Catholic Church catechism states that “the Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is intrinsic to Christian worship [21]. The Church rightly honors the Blessed Virgin Mary with special devotions. And that even from ancient times, the Blessed Virgin Mother has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God.’” The development of devotion to Mary can be traced even in the early days of the Christian Church. Such devotion was of central emphasis when the Council of Ephesus in 431 had clearly defined the role of Mary as the Theotokos – the bearer of God. Developments of such devotion grew in the patristic period (354-340), to the Middle Ages (1000-1299), the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and even the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries where we have the Vatican Council II, which was tasked “to bring the devotion to Mary within the bounds of sound theology and practice” [19].

Furthermore, “every age tends to shape Mary according to its own needs” such that others would even interpret such devotions psychologically. Others would say that such devotions were inspired by ancient cults. These devotional developments sometimes divert from the doctrinal and traditional teachings of the Church. But one must be careful to draw conclusions along that line since the history of Marian devotions has nourished the imagination of people through the centuries. This is because “the simpler Catholic faithful, especially the poor and the deprived, have sought in Mary a strength that enabled them to interpret life, to feel accompanied and not abandoned, and to hope, no matter how bad the circumstances and tragedies of their lives” [19].

Mary holds a significant place in the lives and hearts of many Filipino Catholics. Devotion to her is quite popular and alluring. This is important, as pointed out by many Church documents. However, there are some weaknesses too in the way this devotion is often practiced. The same Church documents point more particularly to their lack of solid biblical foundation. More significantly, a deeper and more correct understanding of what the Bible says about Mary is a crucial aspect of the renewal advocated by Vatican II and repeated in various forms since then. The “devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, is as old as the Catholic Church... all true devotions to Mary, however, must always stem from Jesus who is one with God. In other words, devotion to Mary must always be united to one’s love for Jesus... it would be an exaggeration to love and honor Mary and forget why Mary is so great and lovable” [22]. This is because Mary is one of the first faithful disciples of Jesus.

The paradigm of discipleship and seeing Mary as the faithful disciple is to provide the vantage point from which to approach the whole mystery of Mary as a person, a believer, and a model of the faithful. Parallelism on spirituality is thus shared on these key points. Important biblical underpinnings for the claims and suggestions of Church statements concerning Mary and Marian devotions come to the fore. It may be profitable to organize Mariology and Marian devotions around the central paradigm of Mary the faithful disciple. There is then a need for a theological reshaping of the image of Mary which takes into consideration the images of Mary in popular devotions. It is here that we can find what theologians had overlooked: the gaze of Mary as a “heavenly healer, intercessor, prophet, comforter, and a friend” [23].

Since devotion or piety is a personal one, there is the possibility that devotees could approach their devotions apart and even contrary to Church Teachings and Traditions. This could have prompted Pope Paul VI to issue the encyclical *Lumen Gentium* (1964) to remind the faithful about the cult of Mary forming during that time. Ten years later, Pope Paul VI promulgated a more detailed discussion of the Faithful’s devotion to Mary in the encyclical *Mariialis Cultus*. It was written, “The piety of the faithful and their veneration of the Mother of God has taken on many forms according to circumstances of time and place, the different sensibilities of peoples, and their different cultural traditions. Hence it is that the forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, emphasize the elements that are ever-new, and incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection and the proposals of the Church’s Magisterium [21].”

Indeed, because of the meager biblical passages to support some Catholic dogma with regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary, people are misled by individuals who try to insist on their own agenda. There is a tendency where “popular devotions can become more important than the liturgy... they can be one-sided, too subjectivistic, degeneration into magical or superstitious idolatry or abused for other purposes” [24]. In the Philippine setting, some devotions to the Blessed Mother have even become a form of fundamentalism. Devotees consider religious relics as amulets, as materials to cure different diseases, and to the extent of prioritizing some Marian rites over the Eucharist. Thus, “the history of popular piety shows that devotions to Mary can become excessive if not checked – and unless religious leaders and liturgists are able to direct such devotions into approved forms of piety” [23].

All of the above points to only one thing, popular devotion is one way in which one can encounter the Blessed Virgin Mother through the lives of people who were influenced by her very life and spirit(uality). In the Philippines, “the designation “Mother” is regarded as special, if not primary, by many Filipinos.” She is the Ina who is intimate, compassionate, understanding, nurturing, and ever ready to help as well as protect her children ... a mama who will deliver her sons and daughters from personal disasters and social catastrophes; she is the loving and understanding “mother” who will shield her offspring from the wrath of God who is “father.” This would explain the tendency of many devotees to look at their devotions in terms of what they could get from them. Yes, Mary is considered a mother but a functional mother, who oftentimes is understood as detached from her real role as the Mother of the Messiah. She is sometimes considered the provider, the savior, and the comforter [25].

This is confirmed by one respondent devotee who said:

“Dagiti mulmula mi nga pagay ken dadduman pay ket maispal da met. Saan da unay nga mapirdi... ni Mama Mary ti kasla agpatingnga tapno ti kararag ket mapatgan ti anak na nga ni Hesus. Ngem mamatiak nga adda met gracia nga aggapu ken Mama Mary saan laeng nga ni Hesus (our plants and others are saved from calamities. They are not much affected...Mary serves as mediator so that our prayers are granted by her son Jesus Christ. But I believe that grace can come from Mary and not only Jesus).”

One can sense here the growing belief that Mama Mary could provide everything. If one wants to have a safe trip, he can go to Our Lady of Antipolo; if one wants a certain favor like passing the board exams, finding a job, or finding a cure for sickness, he goes to a particular shrine to pray to Our Lady.

Regardless of how devotees perceive and practice devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is very important that such must be within the bounds of faith and tradition so that they can avoid the warning of some theologians and scholars and even the message of Pope Paul, the VI contained in his encyclical *Marialis Cultus*. In practice, many invoke the intercession of Mary by directing prayers to her. But people should be educated to understand that every prayer terminates in God and is theocentric by its nature. One does not pray to Mary, so the prayer first stops at Mary, who then proceeds to bring it to Christ or God [5].

This is affirmed by Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* where he pointed out that the holy rosary is a prayer “remembering Christ with Mary, learning Christ from Mary, being conformed to Christ with Mary, proclaiming Christ with Mary, and praying to Christ with Mary.” Only Christ or God can give grace for the Mother only intercedes. However, among the respondent devotees, it seems evident that their devotion was strengthened by the belief that the Blessed Virgin Mother grants their prayers.

### **Mary and the Beginning of CICM**

Mary's place in the *Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae* (CICM) is expressed in its Constitutions and General Directory, which reads: “The congregation is an international religious missionary institute. It was founded by Theophile Verbist and is dedicated to the Incarnate Word, under the name and patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary [26].” These two statements reminisce about the past and envision the future of the congregation. It reminisces about the past, for it tells how and why the Congregation was established by its

founder, Fr. Theophile Verbist, and envisions the future since it tells the nature of the congregation and its endeavors being dedicated to the Incarnate Word. And with this reminiscence and envisioning is a perpetual “belongingness to the family of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her help and encouragement [27].”

From the interviews of some CICM missionaries and evaluation of documents, there are several ways in which one can approach the question – what made Fr. Theophile Verbist choose the name of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the congregation? This question is important for it is said that “to bear the name of someone means to belong to that person’s family and to be able to count on that person’s help and encouragement” [27]. The name serves as the foundation for understanding Marian spirituality in the context of the CICM.

The first approach is historical-cultural. It is a way of understanding the reason why Fr. Theophile Verbist chose the Immaculate Heart of Mary as the CICM’s patroness could be gleaned from the history and culture of Europe in the early and middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This view was pointed out by most CICM respondent missionaries. The CICM Congregation “was founded at a time when Marian devotion was very popular due to the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854” [27] few years before the founding of the CICM [28].

But why the Immaculate Heart of Mary? Why not a different name for the Blessed Virgin? The liturgical cult of devotion to the Immaculate Heart was started by St. John Eudes (1601-1680). Prior to him, there were already private devotions to the Immaculate Heart, but “one cannot yet really refer to it as a genuine public cult.” St. John Eudes wanted Roman approval for the feast of the Immaculate Heart, but this was disapproved, although many bishops in France at that time were already saying mass for the feast of the Immaculate Heart. He claims that “the heart was a notion that summed up everything, a center, a climate in which converged all that was most expressive and deep to manifest the mystery of Christ and his Most Holy Mother, Mary.” However, St. John Eudes did not live long to see the fruits of his efforts [29].

The next propagator of the cult was Joseph Francois de Gallifet, S.J. He wanted to “treat the cause of the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus jointly with that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. However, the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome did not approve of it, emphasizing the danger that the Immaculate Heart of Mary could be taken “solely, barely, solitarily, corporally and materially” like the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But in 1765, after the approval of the liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome clarified that the object of celebration is the symbolic Heart of Jesus Christ, not its physical and material heart. This paved the way for more petitions from different Dioceses in Europe for the liturgical feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On August 31, 1805, the Sacred Congregation of Rites granted the petitions of all Diocese and religious institutions the power to celebrate the liturgical feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Sunday after the feast of the Assumption. On July 22, 1855, Rome made a decree granting a Mass and Office for the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Finally, on June 26, 1862 (a few months before the formation of the CICM), the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary became a feast of obligation in Spain. However, after the Vatican Council II review, the celebration through the new Roman calendar was made as an optional memorial celebrated on the Saturday after the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

What is the value of this quite long exposition on the development of the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the name of the CICM? “After the decree of 1855, numerous religious institutes and many dioceses wished to avail themselves of this concession.” Auge [29] noted that the years of 1860-1862 cover the period when Theophile Verbist traveled much in Europe, contacting Bishops and other church leaders for the support of his dream of organizing a group of Belgian Missionaries to China. During this time, in 1861, they began drafting the organization's Statutes [28]. This is supported by the different letters of Theophile Verbist to different Church leaders about their plan of organizing a mission to China [30].

The researchers infer that Theophile Verbist had chosen the name of the Immaculate Heart of Mary since such devotion and liturgical feast originated in France by the Frenchman St. John Eudes, and incidentally, the



Belgian Mission he is organizing will be under the French missionaries who are at that time stationed in China and who will be their protector. In a letter dated July 27, 1865, to Cardinal Sterckx, the Archbishop of Malines (Belgium), before their departure for China, he wrote: "The French Government has just assured us in China, in fact, the protection of the Emperor (Napoleon III), and sent us the passports that we need to go and reside in Mongolia."

In fact, the challenges and delays will be recognized by Fr. Theophile Verbist himself through a letter to his spiritual director on May 23, 1866. He wrote, "How wrong of us, dear Father, to complain about the delay experienced to leave Europe, and about certain circumstances that we believed to be unfavorable. On the contrary, we can say that everything was fixed carefully and with a friendly hand in order to make the organization of the Mission in China easier for us. How wrong of us not to trust God's work! [28]." God must have prepared the way for these Belgian missionaries through the challenges and difficulties they had experienced before leaving China since their life in China itself would not be that easy.

### **Mary and the Patronage of the CICM**

The second approach is biblical-theological. This would provide a biblical or theological perspective in understanding the founding of the CICM congregation. In the interview with Fr. Fernold Dena, he said that aside from the popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Theophile Verbist, as a Diocesan priest, could already have such devotion to the Blessed Virgin while he was in formation. He also said that his desire to be of help to the people of China, especially the abandoned children, manifested in them having to follow the Immaculate Heart of Mary through her fiat. Fr. Macwayne Maniwang also forwarded this idea and said that Mary could have been chosen because of "her exemplary traits, the vision to be with people, especially in difficult times." This could be an allusion to the visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, where Mary showed concern and compassion to Elizabeth, who will bear the one to prepare the way for Jesus (Lk 1:39-56).

In a similar vein of reasoning, Fr. Vincent Bunagan said that one possible reason for Fr. Theophile Verbist in choosing the Immaculate Heart of Mary is based on the Bible itself. The founder had taken Mary as a model since Mary said yes to the invitation of the angel: "When the Angel said you will be the mother of the Son of God to be born." Mary doubted but she obeyed. He further explained that "immaculate means purity. Mary has a purity of heart. She has that Immaculate or pure heart to accept the invitation of God." Fr. Vincent must be making a reference to the annunciation (Lk:26-38). Furthermore, Fr. Adorable Castillo explains that "in our church tradition – the Immaculate Heart of Mary has something to do with the purity of Hearts – if we look at Mary in the Scriptures Mary was presented a certain task, a certain mission and Mary has a purity of Heart, a welcoming heart, an accepting heart." This is also the point of view of Fr. Theo Bonarius when he said Theophile Verbist wanted "total dedication. Mary's response of 'Your will be done' ... (is an example that shows) that His will and His words are number one."

Sometime in the summer of 1861, Theophile Verbist was inspired to write the statutes of the congregation after a meeting with the Apostolic Vicar of Beijing, J.M. Mouly, through the founder and President of the Work of the Holy Childhood, Miss Marie-Virginie Evain [28]. The Apostolic Vicar had promised the possibility of giving up a large part of the Vicariate of Mongolia to the Belgian Priests. This is supported by the letter of Joseph Martial Mouly to Theophile Verbist himself [30]. After the meeting with J. M. Mouly, the group met every week, and during the first meeting, they agreed "to dedicate the Congregation to the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

It could also be shown that Theophile Verbist was himself a devotee to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was shown by the Annals of the Work of the Belgian Mission in China, which contained the correspondences of Theophile Verbist himself to several Church Leaders and the other members of the Congregation [30]. As Fr. Ernesto Amigleio communicated, "Fr. Theophile Verbist had a great devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In his official letters, he always invoked the name of the Immaculate Heart of Mary." In Fr. Theophile Verbist's letter to Joseph Wilrycx, one of the early ordained missionaries produced by the CICM, he earnestly emphasized the difficult mission in Mongolia and so he advised him to examine his "heart" whether or not his

vocation is half or really full for the missions. He ended the letter with the statement, “Accept, my dear friend, with a renewed assurance of my deep affection, the congratulations and kind regard of all your confreres who are one with me in the union of your prayers and of your holy sacrifices in the Immaculate Heart of Mary [30].”

Similar letters were in the CICM Archives, like the letter of October 20, 1867, where Fr. Theophile Verbist wrote to the Novices in Scheut where he challenged them to prove that they can find satisfaction which their heart has a right to and without which they cannot be happy for “the missionary has only the spirit of faith to support and protect (them) against all sorts of natural repugnance, repulsion or boredom which overwhelms (their) soul so frequently.” He ended the letter by saying, “If the novitiate has as its foundation true devotion, obedience, love, and mortification, know, then, that this way you guarantee its spirit which it needs to give to God and Church perfect missionaries. That is the grace I will ask the Lord every day for you through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our saintly patroness, until she leads you healthy and safe to the mission field which has been assigned for your apostolic zeal [30].”

In his letters to the CICM students in Rome, he instructed them to prepare ahead of time for the mission. He asked them to provide themselves with a “good amount of virtues, especially self-denial, patience, and trust,” for he believed these virtues “will safeguard them against the attack of the enemy.” He concluded the letter with the phrase, “Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary of our dear Mother, let us try to obtain peace for the Church and expansion of her Kingdom among the nations.” Even when he communicated with non-CICM confreres, his devotion to the Immaculate Heart was obvious [31]. Such devotion is understood as a readiness to work for the redemption of humanity. This is summarized in a statement: “Father Verbist regularly expressed how his heart ached for those who suffered the non-Gospel values. He invited his companions to meet in Mary’s Heart – to look to her unqualified yes to the calling of the Father for inspiration and strength [32].”

### **Mary and the Inspiration of the CICM**

A third approach is hermeneutic-exegetical. It provides the old and current interpretations of documents and biblical texts. Some responses of interviewed CICM Missionaries could be classified as hermeneutical yet exegetical since their responses are always anchored with an interpretation of Biblical texts or events in the context of the CICM congregation. According to Fr. Jean Lugbu, Fr. Theophile Verbist’s choice of the Immaculate Heart of Mary might be because of the good qualities of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Asked what those qualities are, he explained that one of her good qualities is “her obedience to God’s will. She came from a very poor place but she was chosen as the mother of God. And of all, she said yes, because of her fiat to the will of God. Knowing her weaknesses and emptiness, she still said yes to be an instrument; she made herself available to be an instrument for the redemption of the whole world.”

It seems that Fr. Jean Lugbu was referring to the availability of Mary in obeying God’s will and if the early members of the CICM have the same kind of availability, there would be no reason why Church Authorities in Rome would not allow them to leave Belgium for China for the redemption of those who do not believe and the salvation of so many abandoned children. And so the “dedication to the Incarnate Word (and adopting the name of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) must be understood as a readiness to work for the redemption: the members are totally devoted to the service of Christ from whom redemption proceeds” [28].

Fr. Pedro Peñaranda is of similar thought when he said that Fr. Theophile Verbist’s “inspiration was to take care of the abandoned children in China, in which case it would have been appropriate in his mind to adopt the Mother of all as patroness for his missionary enterprise.” Fr. Gabriel Dieryck spoke more elaborately when he said that Fr. Theophile Verbist had chosen the Immaculate Heart of Mary for two reasons. On the one hand, the Immaculate Heart “is a sign that Mary is especially graced by God not to be affected by the sinfulness of our human race, and this liberated her up from the influence of sin.”

On the other hand, Mary “is also the mother of those who tries to liberate people from the slavery of sin. And so it is in this sense that he chose the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” Furthermore, he explicated that Fr. Theophile

Verbist may not have articulated this but that “this is for the missionary work that he has to do... (Mary is a) Mother and (she) is good support in their missionary life. The Mother of Jesus is their own mother. They find and feel strength, support, and consolation in their devotion to the Blessed Mother (Immaculate Heart).”

One can see Marian language in the letter of Fr. Theophile Verbist, such as “May God’s will be done” and “I will keep them all in my heart.” It might be too presumptuous to say that his language is very Marian, and if it is true that language is always connected to consciousness, then Fr. Theophile Verbist must be a real and true Marian not only in his actions but also in his mind. This understanding is strengthened by an interpretation of his letter to his spiritual counselor, Benjamin Bousse, where the content of the letter is a prayer of thanksgiving similar to the Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fr. Theophile Verbist showed humility that he could not have accomplished much without others and God. He also acknowledged the many blessings for the congregation and recognized God’s grace throughout their missionary existence [28].

Many CICM missionary respondents refer to Mary’s Biblical life as the source of inspiration for the founder and the early members of the congregation. Fr. Jean Lugbu pointed out the total fiat of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the will of God. “Mary was the one who brought Jesus into the world. She accepted to be the instrument of God to bring Jesus, happiness, the Son of God into the world – the word of God that became flesh and lived among us.” So, when the first Belgian Missionaries went to China, they brought Jesus, the good news. They are like Mary bringing Jesus into the world when Mary accepted the calling of bearing Jesus. Fr. Jean Lugbu is now assigned in Mindanao the so-called “Land of Promise,” but it has become now, according to him, the “land of war, of killings.” One needs Mary’s courage and faith to be in this red area.

Some respondents, CICM missionaries also answered that Mary was a model disciple for the early members of the congregation, especially the founder and his assistants. They focused on the “total dedication (of Mary) to God as an invitation to the CICM who have been asking her name to carry out the mission of the congregation.” “Your will be done” is the missionary language. Furthermore, they say that “Mary has the purity of heart, the purity of heart to accept the invitation of God.” And that “she (Mary) laid down the motivation to allow CICM to do its tasks even in the most difficult times.”

Similar themes are echoed by most CICM respondent missionaries. They explained that “Mary has become the example and prototype of discipleship. She continues to inspire everyone in the congregation.” This statement expresses the contemporary theology that focuses more on discipleship rather than the motherhood of Mary. This is seconded by Fr. Neil Sta. Ana and Fr. Pedro Dulnuan. They said that “Mary remains as a CICM model of service and prayer. Mary’s “YES” serves as an inspiration. Now, I think it remains the same. Mary is the model of CICM spirituality. You cannot remove the picture of Mary from that of Jesus but it remains that Mary is our model and reference for our spirituality. And because our congregation is named after Mary, she is definitely there.”

The place of Mary in the CICM is laid down in its constitution, which explains that “the constitutions call Mary the model of faith and of total dedication to God and to her Son’s mission. How did Mary become this model for us? In harmony with the history of her people and with God’s intervention, she humbly and confidently accepted the invitation of God to participate in this history. She asked questions; she intervened; she watched and pondered all things in her heart ... she was just present while Jesus walked even up to the Calvary. Such was Mary’s faith: active, committed, dialoguing, confident and meditative” [27].

It was further emphasized that Mary is a model of her being immaculately conceived. It explained that Mary has become the “archetype of the victory of God over sin and all its consequences...The Immaculate Heart of Mary shows her to be liberated by God and fully associated with the divine love for all.” This explanation in the Commentary on the CICM Constitutions displays the Congregation’s high regard for Mary, the Mother of God. It has then become part of the CICM tradition in the past to pray to Our Lady of Grace, whose statue was placed in the old chapel of Scheut before a missionary has to leave for the mission.

Indeed, the Blessed Virgin Mother played a very important role in the lives of the CICM members. Using the words of Fr. Pedro Peñaranda, “Mary has always been a major inspiration for CICM missionaries all through its 150 years now.”

### **Mary and the Charism of the CICM**

Regarding the CICM charism and the Blessed Virgin Mary, respondent CICM missionaries agree on the Charism of the CICM and the role of Mary in it. However, there seem to be differences in the interpretation of such charism when it comes to the realization of such charism in doing a mission. There are two points then to be considered first, what is the CICM charism? And second, what is the role of Mary in such a charism?

All the CICM respondent missionaries agree on the inseparability of Christ and Mary. If one starts with Jesus Christ, Mary is necessarily mentioned because of her role in redemption and yet if one starts with Mary, ultimately it ends up with Jesus Christ, the sole reason and Mission of the Blessed Mother. Fr. Noel Espina puts it beautifully in this way “All for Jesus and nothing without Mary.” He would further say about his vocation that “mission does not exist without Mary in the midst. That is why Mary is the heart and Jesus is the center of my mission and in the church.” This will only show the inseparability of Jesus and Mary in the CICM context. This is imprinted in the first article of its Constitution that dedicated the whole congregation to the Incarnate Word under the name and patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

But what is the charism of the CICM? Fr. Jean Lugbu pointed out that what is basic is that “CICM is a missionary organization” and so every member of it has to leave his place to somewhere else leaving his comfort zone, and his family and go where he is more needed. And referring to the role of Mary in such charism, he said, “Today, I think Mary still has the same role in this changing world- before, we have to bring the good news and baptized people, but now many people are questioning our Christianity. So, it’s time to bring the same Jesus to people questioning his identity as a son of God. So, today we still do a role similar to that of Mary. As a CICM and Mother Mary as our patron in this congregation, I think we have to be like Mary in this broken, changing world.”

This is complemented by Fr. Gabriel Dieryck that “the charism of the CICM is to go out to those who are in most need- ad gentes- to those non-believing – before it is believed that those non-believing are all outside Europe. Europe was the believing community, the geographic area so we have to go out to those who do not believe. Our charism is to go to the boundaries, the frontiers reaching out.” Thus, the CICM as an international community has to go out of their own country to do mission. Fr. Pedro Dulnuan echoes the same when he said that “the charisma of the CICM is being missionary, going to the frontier situations, pioneers to the places where many don’t dare to go. Mary’s place there is her readiness to serve. The mark of a CICM is the zeal for missionary work.”

And Fr. Pedro Penaranda enunciates the same when he said:

The charism of CICM is AD EXTRA - AD GENTES, meaning, in a nutshell, getting out of one’s comfort zone and natural habitat, and reaching out to proclaim the Gospel to the nations. This was basically the main character of the early Church, of which Mary was already considered the Mother of the Apostles. Mary is thus the missionary par excellence, pushing for and guiding the ongoing missionary responsibilities of the universal Church even at present.

So, the Charism of the CICM is to go out (ad extra), to go out to the nations (ad gentes) wherever the Good News was not heard, especially to the poor. As Fr. Noel Espina said, the charism of CICM is “Going Out,” which means to say “availability of oneself to be sent wherever a CICM presence is needed and, of course, with the special guidance of our spiritual mother, Mary.”

Such charism is clearly expressed in the second article of the CICM Constitution, which reads:

“Like our founder, each of us has heard the call of Christ: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to all creation (Mk. 16, 15). We are sent to the nations to announce the Good News, wherever our missionary



presence is most needed, especially where the Gospel is not known or lived. We leave our country to proclaim salvation as the great gift of God which liberates us from everything that oppresses and divides people. Following Jesus, we address ourselves preferentially to the poor as the privileged recipients of the Kingdom of God. Religious missionaries of different races and cultures, we live and work together as brothers.... (One heart, one soul)” [26].

### **Mary and the Changing Face of Doing Mission**

However, there seems to be a distinct interpretation now of what is meant by *ad extra*. Younger CICM missionaries look at doing mission *ad extra* from a distinct perspective. Thus Fr. Gabriel Dieryck observes this missionary mark of the CICM. He said, “It has always been our work from the beginning. It is normal, natural that we have to go out. We still have it, and we still hold on to it as our special characteristic. Even our last chapter affirmed it. Sometimes it is being questioned, they say now that mission is everywhere and they speak about before as *ad gentes* now mission as *inter gentes* in the midst of- this is valid, but our last chapter will teach that it is very characteristic, we have to go out of our own country which is very symbolic and real- a leaving behind of self go out- it should remain.”

The same observation was made by Fr. John Van Bauwel when he said that “the charism of CICM is mission... And in our time it was mission *ad extra* - that was not questioned. To go out of your own country, but today, *ad extra* has changed a little bit, it so happens that a lot of Filipino confreres are retained and sent to Mindanao.” An explanation of this can be seen from the statement of one of the respondents who said that “the charism of the CICM is MISSION, particularly their mission is -*ad extra* or we go out of our comfort zones and render missions to other people. We call it *ad extra*, before they call it *ad gentes* to the mission mostly they call it *ad extra* but here in the theological meaning of *ad extra* as we call it in CICM is more of going out of yourself that is an expression of total dedication to the mission. Because literally, *ad extra* means you go out of your country, going out of your town, but here in the CICM, it’s more of going out of yourself, and then you dedicate yourself to the mission, especially Christ’s mission. And, of course, the role of Mary is, as I already said, she is the model, our model.”

What brought about the distinct interpretation? Some hints could be found in the responses of some of the CICM respondent missionaries. Fr. Vincent Bunagan made a metaphor about the mission today. He mentioned the experience of the Astronauts who went to the moon, and they have seen from outer space that we are just a small community. We do not actually see differences in color no matter what your race is, we are in this small community. Thus, it has an implication for the idea of *ad extra* – we belong to one community, and there is no such thing as going out.

Fr. Adorable Castillo also has this to say about the nature of the mission in relation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He said:

“Connecting it with Mary - Mary herself did not really go outside Palestine, a small country. When it comes to traveling, it was very limited during that time. They would always say Mary traveled to Judea or Galilee but again the traveling is limited. But when it comes to spirituality it is more about reaching out to people, like when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth near Jerusalem. So, a kind of traveling. But those events tell us very little knowledge of how Mary traveled. However, it is the attitude that may count like reaching out to others like Mary.”

The changing face of mission *Ad Gentes* is accounted for by the contemporary theology of mission. The face of mission had changed and is changing as it responds to the calls of the times. These changes provide excitement in mission yet are painful at times because it means the old ways must be redone or even forgotten. “There should be a way to introduce mission in a manner not always related to structures and charity works [33]. Missionaries should focus more on the people, making use of what can already be found in the mission area: collaborators, natural environment, economic situation, culture, and even faith conviction” [34].

Missionary life, then, is not only for the conversion of non-believers, but it includes, among others, the development of these people in terms of their social, economic, and even political life. Gone are the days when mission meant the conversion of pagans into the faith [35]. Recently, mission has taken a turn from the traditional notion of *ad extra*, that is going out of one's country. For some CICM missionaries, one could be a missionary in his own town or country. These changes in the face of the mission are evident from the statements of some CICM respondent missionaries.

The statements of Fr. Vincent Bunagan expound on this change of perspective. He said:

“The charism of CICM is to go to the marginalized area, to the poor, where the gospel is not heard or practiced. We give priority to the poor. We are the pioneering missionaries- we do this in connection to the character of Mary we have to enliven the word of God in that area- just like Mary we have to give birth or new life on to that area (i.e. squatter areas, areas where there are conflicts, and the words of God are not practiced- in the Cordillera- of the tribal wars) to enliven the words of God-make them understand the joy of living together. That is a simple mission but hard to do. But we make that alive- we give flesh to the word. Squatter areas - how to alleviate the life of the people.”

The Commentary on the CICM Constitution also clearly reflects this changing face of mission *ad gentes* and *ad extra*. “Being a missionary meant going to a mission territory. Today, of course, we realized that mission is everywhere. The mission has as much to do with the task and the attitude that one brings to it as it does with the place where the task is accomplished.” Fr. Ramel Portula [36] emphasized the mission *ad extra* when he said that “one cannot ask how CICM can be better missionaries for the mission today and for tomorrow without asking how he is living his religious and missionary life today. He shared the challenges of the CICM 14th General Chapter, which he attended in Rome.

It does not matter where the mission station is as long as a missionary cooperates with the corporate commitment of CICM and the *Missio Dei*. One good thing is that even with these changes in how missions are now being done, between and among the CICM respondent missionaries, it is evident that the influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary as their patroness is always present.

### **Mary and the Spirit of the CICM**

Before one could look into the nature of Marian Spirituality in the CICM congregation, a very important matter that needs to be addressed, which was pointed out by the Commentary [27], is whether CICM is an Institute of the Incarnate Word or a Marian Institute. This issue was brought about by Article 1 of the CICM Constitutions which dedicated the congregation to the Incarnate Word and named it under the patronage of Mary. This is important since it will define one's understanding of Marian Spirituality in the context of the CICM. Some CICM respondent Missionaries are saying that their spirituality is of the Incarnate Word. However, they also do not deny any Marian spirituality that may have thrived within the congregation. They are trying to raise the point that there is no literature about it, especially in the context of CICM, and no research would authoritatively say what Marian spirituality is.

This issue on the nature of the spirituality of the CICM congregation is important since it would also define Marian spirituality. A look at the role of Mary in the CICM context is then imperative. In history, there was this extreme devotional tendency of devotees to put Mary at the center of everything. This is described by Fr. Ernesto Amigleó when he said that “since the Second Vatican Council, the role of Mary was seen as an important but secondary one in salvation history. Before the Council, Mary, as it were, took a primary role in the life of many Catholics, even to the point of seemingly setting Jesus Christ aside. But that was corrected in the Second Vatican Council.” Fr. Vermundo Miranda even straightforwardly said that Christians tend to look at her as the “fixer” of all our problems and giver of our needs. He even went on to say that Mary has become an “*anting-anting*” (amulet). If there is to be a Marian Spirituality, it must be in constant connection with the Incarnate Word.

It was made clear by the Commentary [27] that the Marian aspect of CICM spirituality is “completely centered on the Incarnate Word as its principal source” and “since the missionary spirituality is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, its core is unmistakably in the kenosis [37], following Jesus, the first missionary” [28]. The CICM Constitution [26], however, does not discount the role of Mary in the Missions, thus paving the way for spirituality not only centered on the Incarnate Word but also on the first disciple who had to enliven a Christ-like life in the person of Mary. Article 16 of the same Constitution provides that “God chose Mary to be the mother of the Incarnate Word. In her, He reveals Himself as the One who exalts the lowly. She has a special place in our lives as missionaries of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We turn to her, model of faith and the total dedication to God and her Son’s mission.”

The above article “manifests the Marian aspect” of the CICM spirituality. This only shows that the framers of the CICM Constitution saw the significant role of Mary in the CICM spirituality. It says that they should turn to her as a model of faith and total dedication to God and His son’s mission. Thus, while being true to the mission set forth by the Incarnate Word one true CICM missionary could not detach himself from following the footsteps of Mary not only as the Mother of Christ but as a faithful and model disciple of all times.

As a model disciple, Mary has shown her faith in God through her fiat. Such that if there is such a Marian Spirituality, it must be based on Mary’s total faith and availability to the task or mission that God has made for her. One respondent expressed the same tone when he said, “The fiat of Mama Mary (is the source of her spirituality). She must obey the angel and go to Egypt to save the baby Jesus. What is so strong is the total fiat of Mary to her responsibility until the last breath of Jesus. When everybody left, she was with the dead Jesus.” Fr. Adorable Castillo has a similar view that a Marian spirituality must be self-effacing; that is, one forgets any kind of greatness, even oneself, just to be of service to God through service to other people. Like what older CICM missionaries had done, they are “missionaries working for the people. They are of service to the people while these missionaries are rugged.”

One thing is for sure, CICM missionaries do not just look at the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, taken as they are, out of context. Thus, Fr. Macwayne Maniwang says, “Marian spirituality is not a compilation of many Marian virtues but it is simply doing what one should be doing for those in need.” It must transcend the purely devotional virtues of Mary. Bishop Carlito Cenzon, Fr. Vermundo Miranda, and other CICM respondent Missionaries agreed that Marian spirituality should be based on her fiat and Magnificat, for it is there that one can see her dedication to the Incarnate Word. Mary did not only accept to bear the Child Jesus but also continued to show and offer, through her guiding wisdom and faith, the incarnate Word to the world.

One could sense now that if Marian Spirituality exists (in the CICM as an Institute), then it must be a living faith, a spirituality in action. This is best described by Fr. Gabriel Dieryck, CICM, when he said, “I believe the basic things like availability, love for Jesus, and also love for other people like the poor. Mary helps us a little bit to be humbler and not to be very proud. Availability and sensitivity for the needs of others, love for Jesus and certain modesty and humility.”

One can also see here a new direction in understanding Mary. It is obvious that the CICM Missionary respondents are very aware of the new theology in understanding who Mary is in the Bible. In the past, Mary had been introduced as passive, submissive, meek, obedient, pious, and the like. This has been reinforced by Marian Devotions that put so much emphasis on the glorification of Mary. But today, there is now a growing emphasis on the discipleship of Mary as found in her Magnificat and her life beside the Incarnate Word. Mary, who is like other women of her time, is now understood more as the woman from Nazareth.

This was evident in Fr. Pedro Penaranda’s statement that emphasized the kind of Marian spirituality present in the CICM. He said:

“I believe that every human organization cannot survive and thrive without deep respect and fidelity toward its origins. If CICM was downright Marian from the beginning, its future could be no less. Nonetheless, I am happy that CICM Marian spirituality has never really been the goody and the pious type, but has always been

after the tough Mary of the Magnificat, model of deep faith in God, queen of the apostles, inspiration for a sensitive and dutiful missionary conscience.”

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

One could see that a Marian Spirituality, while unexplored (inexistent or unresearched), is deeply rooted in the charism of CICM. But just like the charism of the CICM, as Nestor Pycke [28] opines, CICM Missionaries “do not speak much of their charism. They simply possess it. But when they ask themselves questions about their call and mission in the church and the world of today, they are quite surprised to see how their missionary charism is at work in all that they are and all that they do.” By analogy, the same could be said about Marian Spirituality since we have seen the necessary connection between the CICM Charism and the role of Mary in the CICM as an Institute or Congregation.

Another point worth emphasizing is that Marian Spirituality in the context of CICM leads back, first, to the very beginning of salvation history, in the Biblical story of the Incarnation of the Word and the acceptance of Mary of her role, second, to the development of devotions to and the theology and doctrines about the Blessed Mother of the Incarnate Word, which influenced in one way or another the formation of the CICM and third, to the living out of a mission to work for the poorest of the poor, the orphaned, those who never heard the Gospel, people who are in frontier situations. This is best described by Fr. Renillo Sta. Ana, CICM, when he said, “Like Mary, she received the word, put it in her heart and hurriedly brought the Word to her cousin, and attended to her cousin’s needs. A CICM Missionary does the same. He received the Gospel, contemplated it in his heart, and actively brings out the Gospel to the people and attends to their needs [38].”

Some scholars and theologians would say that the life of Mary had already been foretold in the Old Testament. Only in the New Testament does she finally appear and play her role in humanity’s salvation history. The first account of Mary’s life, especially in the New Testament, is during the Annunciation, where Mary was graced by God to be the bearer of His Son. The annunciation accounts for Mary’s fiat, her total availability for the plan of God. This is followed by the Visitation where Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth. The visitation accounts for Mary’s Magnificat where Mary herself expressed her deep faith and trust in God’s salvific power and her readiness to serve the Lord her God at all cost. This is followed by the Nativity and the presentation of Jesus in the temple until the Messiah grew of age with her motherly care and guidance. Mary had been always with Jesus’ public life and even at the foot of the cross where Christ himself died. Mary was suffering with her Son, Jesus, at the foot of the Cross. This Bible narrative only tells us that Mary and Jesus have an intimate relationship. Mary is not only the Mother of the Messiah but also His first faithful disciple. These are some reasons why the Church gives much reverence to Mary.

A survey and hermeneutical assessment of Church documents and pronouncements of the Church shows the high regard and respect that the Church is giving to Mary, the Theotokos. The Church Hierarchy emphasized the role of Mary in our salvation. Thus, it is but right to give her a place in the Church and in our hearts. She is the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of all, one who is perpetually virgin and immaculately conceived. All of these were made to make her being the Mother of God, the Co-Redemtrix, and Mediatrix of all graces possible. The Church Hierarchy of course does not make all these doctrines of faith and tradition exalt Mary over the Son of God. This was pointed out by Vatican Council II. Although Mary played a great role in the salvation of humanity, Vatican II cautions us that Mary is not God. But what she has and what she did are worth emulating for our good and the good of the Church. She is considered by many theologians and Mariologists as the first disciple of Jesus. Some of these names that the Church had given to Mary were the cause and even effect of many popular devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

With deep respect and reverence for the Mother of the Messiah, people developed cults of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Emphasizing Mary’s connection with the Savior, many people see Mary as the mediator for all prayers and sometimes seen extremely as the “fixer” of all our problems and the “giver” of all needs. This is evident from the responses of respondent devotees themselves. This results in exalting Mary and forgetting the context of her being Blessed and Full of Grace, Christ, the Messiah Himself. Thus, Vatican II tried to bring the



devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the right direction under proper tradition and the correct theological interpretation of Mary's role in humanity's salvation.

The overemphasis on Marian Devotion is brought about by the overemphasis on Motherhood and the immaculate qualities of the Blessed Virgin as if there is nothing she cannot do. Vatican II and contemporary theology, as well as Mariology, pointed out that there is one dimension in Mary that is often overlooked: the discipleship of Mary (contained in the Magnificat and her intimate association with Christ from her womb up to His death on the Cross). It is in this discipleship that one could surmise the mission of Mary. One has not only to be so still, quiet, submissive, pious, or meek, but one must walk the distance, get hungry, tired, and even suffer and maybe die just like Mary. This has been the life of CICM missionaries who submitted themselves under the patronage and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Who is Mary among the CICM? From the interviews and documents analyzed and interpreted, one can say that Mary played a very important role in the formation and the continuing presence of CICM in the world as a missionary institution. CICM itself as the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary bears the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary. But as explained, to bear the name of a person means that you become part and parcel of that person's family and are able to count on that person's help and encouragement (indeed parents would not have helped their children and encouraged them to be who they will be if they do not belong to the family). CICM missionaries today attest to the invaluable role of Mary in the founding of their congregation. This is supported by documents preserved from the founding and even before the foundation of the Institute.

Yet the CICM Congregation itself had been going on with its missionary works without clearly and expressly elaborating on Marian Spirituality. This was because, as supported by the interviews, the CICM is dedicated to the Incarnate Word. Through this dedication, they see their commissioning for their mission *ad gentes* in general and *ad extra* in particular. But documents and the interviews do not discount the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Immaculate Heart from which the Congregation had its name. One thing for sure is that there are now reflections and (few and short) literature that speak about CICM spirituality. Incidentally, they may not be so expressive of their spirituality, but once asked, they know clearly who and what they are.

Similarly, Marian Spirituality in the context of the CICM Congregation is in the same boat as CICM spirituality itself. They may not be expressive of the role and influence of the Blessed Mother on the missionary activities of the CICM congregation but people whom they served and still serving would attest that they are Missionaries who not only believed in the virtues of the Blessed Mother but lived as witnesses to the immense power and influence that such virtues can bring.

The CICM missionaries had transformed not only the lives of people in their mission stations but also the community itself in their educational, social, economic, and religious dimensions. These are concrete manifestations that they had witnessed not only the pious Mary, as most devotees perceived, but also the disciple Mary, as perceived by younger CICM missionaries and expounded by contemporary Theologians and Mariologists. For the CICM missionaries, Mary is the disciple who accepted her mission in faith, one who kept all things in her heart, and one who does not only bring the Incarnate Word to people but one who is willing to live and transform the lives of people, especially those in need, like Mary when she visited her cousin Elizabeth. Mary served as one of the intermediaries in Jesus' public life, starting at the wedding in Cana until suffering from her Son, Jesus, at the foot of the cross. With all these things, she had fulfilled her mission as the bearer of God's Son and as a disciple of the Messiah. This is the core basis of the Marian and missionary spirit of the CICM congregation.

The ultimate question now is what is Marian Spirituality? To understand it, one must go back to the Gospels, the Good News of man's salvation. There, one finds this woman, graced by God, to be the bearer of the Incarnate Word and one who magnifies the Lord for all the good things He has done for His people of Israel. A woman who, from the very start of Jesus' public life, was always there as one who believed and put all in her heart the faith in her Son also suffered at the foot of the Cross until the incarnate Word's last breath. Thus,

Mary showed the world that first and foremost, she is not only the Mother of the Incarnate Word but also the first and faithful Disciple of Him. Indeed, she had an Immaculate Heart

This has been very clear in our Catholic Doctrines and Traditions. Mary is revered by the Church by giving her place in Church documents, church calendars, and celebrations. This is concretized by the devotion of believers to the special call and grace given by God to Mary and her special response to such a call. She has become a role model for every Christian. She has become a model of spiritual life, for she has lived a life congruent to the life God has stored for her. She has lived by her name as the Mother of God, pure and ever-virgin, the perpetual help of all, and the first disciple of Jesus.

For St. Mary's University to elaborate on Marian Spirituality must also be true to its name. A name given by the CICM Missionaries, and so it is but proper that any definition of Marian Spirituality is uprooted in the context of the CICM Congregation. One can see how the CICM (implicitly and explicitly) lived the spirituality of Mary as a model in witnessing a life dedicated to the Incarnate Word. We can see in Mary a kind of Spirituality that is not only pious, humble, simple, and obedient but one that is "active, committed, dialoguing, confident and even meditative." A kind of spirituality that is not limited to the four corners of a prayer room but one that reaches out and brings the Incarnate Word to different people so that they will not only feel and live justice and peace, love and care, and the greatness of God but, for the Incarnate Word, will be instruments to make others feel and live the same.

Marian spirituality is life in the spirit that gains its foundation and inspiration from Mary's basic religious experience, as narrated in the Holy Scripture. She was called by God to play a very important role in the history of man's salvation, which she accepted in prayer and full faith. In obedience and faith, she went out to reach out to her cousin Elizabeth and piously accomplished her role as the mother of the Son of God. Caring for the Messiah while in her womb, delivering Him into the world, and taking care of Him as a loving and caring mother. But aside from her motherly role, she was her son's first and foremost disciple. Walking and traveling beside her Son and even suffering with Him at the foot of the cross.

This is the spirit of Mary: one who is not only obedient but one who takes initiative, one who does not only keep everything in her heart but one who radiates what is in her heart, one who is not only prayerful but one who actively does something to achieve her prayer, one who is silent but one who mediates, one who does not live for herself but others and for the one who called her to be the Theotokos.

The spiritual life of Mary finds its realization today in the life of the CICM. Being dedicated to the Incarnate Word and under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, CICM has formed itself under the guidance and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and up to now, it continues to be the exemplar of a Marian life through its charism to go out, not only of one's own country but even from one's comfort zones to be at the service of others and for the greater glory of God, through the Incarnate Word. The CICM served as a paragon of a life of prayer, external witnessing, and living as a community, lives which served as the foundation of Mary's spiritual life.

In a nutshell, Marian Spirituality then is founded on the truth that Mary, the model of faith and total dedication to God and the Incarnate Word's mission, assists humanity to witness and recognize the greatness of God's Love for all mankind. Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, God reveals Himself as the One who exalts the lowly. Mary then became the symbol of availability, mission ad extra, love and care, faith in action, and faithful discipleship, thus, making Marian Spirituality mean availability, self-forgetfulness for the service of others, and the witnessing of life in the Incarnate Word.

Enthused by the CICM charism of mission ad extra, dedicated to the Incarnate Word, and exemplified by Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word and the Queen of all creation, Marian Spirituality animates every Marian to be a competent and creative person in the name of the Incarnate Word, Christ and a faithful disciple at the service of the community and the proclamation of the greatness of the Lord and for the respect and preservation of the integrity of the whole of creation.

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10. Fr. Jesse Hechanova, CICM, Saint Mary's University's second President, started envisioning an ideal Marian and what Saint Mary's University should be. He introduced the four Cs (Competence, Creativity, Commitment, Christian Discipleship), which were laid down in the souvenir book of Saint Mary's University 1928-2008: *Crossing Boundaries at 80*. In the same book, Herbert Telen said, "The school is a social system, for like a society, the school has an internal structure. It breathes its life, sustained by a culture that has its traditions, symbols, ways of approaching problems, and communication channels. It is inhabited by human beings, with their own needs, emotions, interests and aspirations...It has a way of life." These statements have inspired the researchers to ask what kind of culture has been and is being cultivated at Saint Mary's University. This institution is moving towards celebrating its centennial foundation, and the perennial questions are: "Have we established among our students and employees a Marian culture based on Marian Spirituality, or are we yet to establish one?" See also Hechanova, Jesse CICM (2008). "The Four Cs (Competence, Creativity, Commitment, Christian Discipleship)." *SMU Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Program : 1928-2008*. Bayombong: Saint Mary's University.
11. Kimberly Neuendorf (2002) describes Content analysis as "summarizing quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity, intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented."
12. Hermeneutics began as the science of interpreting ancient documents, making a consistent picture when the parts themselves drew their meaning from the document as a whole, but has become important to literature in general. This is premise on the idea that "our views are always bound up with our present concerns, just as those concerns are themselves colored by past traditions." In the context of this research, texts and other documents shall be evaluated and interpreted according to acceptable norms or meaning that will make the message of a text or document clearer and understandable.

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39. Persons who have been in contact to past and present CICM Missionaries could attest to the living out of such Charism and Marian Spirituality that is evident within the CICM Missionaries and the institution itself. One has only to read into the corporate commitment of the CICM in the field of pastoral work, education, JPIC and others will show how such Charism and Marian Spirituality were put into action. The testimony of several Marian devotees attests to the dedication of many CICM Missionaries to the Incarnate Word guided by the Marian Spirituality that they possessed. To name a few, Fr. Ted Bandsma, Fr. Godfrey Lambreck, Fr. Herman Sanderinck, Fr. Paul Van den Daelen, and many others who, in one way or another, touched and transformed their lives. One of the researchers would forever cherish the memories that he had of Fr. James Ter Meer, who, in his judgment, had seen one of the barometers of missionary life, a Marian and a CICM missionary.