

Being Marist

WEST CENTRAL EUROPE



Dear Marist Friends!

I hope you all are keeping well and continuing to weave the Marist spirit into your life experience and work.

We decided to send you a special edition of «Being Marist» to keep you informed of two special events that took place already this year, the meeting of European Mission Councils in Barcelona and the International Marist Youth Gathering in Guatemala both of which we were well represented with full reports in this newsletter. These experiences really show the tremendous International dimension of our Marist

world and the richness we gain from meeting other Marists. These were great opportunities to be part of this Marist Global family especially for our seven colleagues in the province who were in Guatemala. Let us continue to support one another as we develop a way of Being Marist relevant to the times we live in.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Ashling for her continuing great work on behalf of the Mission Council and for putting this newsletter together. I wish her all the best as she leaves us for a while

on maternity leave and assure her of our prayers and support in the months ahead. Wishing all of you our deep appreciation for all you do and be assured of our continued support in the Mission Council.

Br PJ McGowan

Chairperson of
the Mission Council
West Central
Europe





Gathering of European Marist Mission Councils

January 13th — 17th 2019

The meeting took place at Les Avellanès a former formation house for the Marist Brothers about two hours from Barcelona. There were over 40 people present from the five Province Mission Councils in Europe including Brothers and Lay colleagues. Bro Robert Thunus our Provincial elect and myself attended on behalf of our Province of West Central Europe.

The first day of the conference was very much getting to know all the various formation programmes that are taking place in each of the provinces with staff in schools and projects. It is very clear that a lot of personnel, finance and resources are been put into the spiritual empowerment of all those involved in Marist Mission in Europe. A lot of focus on accompaniment spiritual programmes, leadership programmes for all in key roles, ongoing formation in child protection and the advantages and challenges associated with social media. Regarding our Province there was great interest in our Marist student leadership programme in Ireland and Scotland. They were also anxious to hear how our work

with Marist Core teams was progressing. There were also keen to hear about our links with Marists in Australia and USA.

At the beginning of the second day we had a very interesting presentation on the strategic plan from Bro Oscar on behalf of the Marist Brothers General Council in Rome. I was struck by the theme running through the presentation of co-creating the various outcomes which very much respected the collaboration of brothers and lay colleagues and also that the different elements of the plan would have to respect the realities in different parts of the Marist world. We will be hearing a lot more about this plan in the years ahead.

The rest of that day was focussed on how we in Marist Europe could work together. Some areas which were raised as possible options for us to work together included:

1. Closer cooperation on the various volunteering programmes.
2. Marist Student Leadership programme.
3. Promoting the rights of the Child, sexual education and child protection.
4. Youth ministry and social projects-formation and good practice.



5. Accompaniment programmes- sharing programmes together.
6. Leadership programmes.
7. Digital competencies and use in formation.
8. Fundraising in Europe.

All these suggestions will now be studied by the European Mission Council and the various commissions to decide what areas we start to work on in Europe.

I found the Gathering a very useful opportunity to meet fellow Marists from the rest of Europe. It was good to continue to build up relationships with people in the various European provinces and benefit from their good practices. It also allows us to share our resources and explore possible initiatives we can do together in the future.

P.J McGowan F.M.S.

Marist Youth Gathering - Weaving Life Guatemala 2019

This year the Mission Council was delighted to support seven young people from our province of West Central Europe to attend the Marist Youth Gathering in Guatemala, Weaving Life 2019.

The gathering took place for a week from 15th – 20th January. The young people who attended held various roles of Marist Leadership across the province.

- **Jasmin Nimar** – CMI Germany - Volunteer and Animator for the event
- **Mitch Lindsay** – Marist Leadership Coordinator Marian College Dublin
- **Leigh Ellis** – Marist Leadership Coordinator Moyle Park College Dublin
- **Matthias Spanrad** – Marist Core Team member Maristen Gymnasium Furth
- **Ciaran McDermott** – Marist Leader and past pupil Marist College Athlone
- **Fuad Usman** – Marist Leader and past pupil Moyle Park College Dublin
- **Ahmed Hamed Aly** – Marist Leader and past pupil Marian College Dublin

We are very appreciative to all the School Principals in particular who showed great

belief in our Marist mission by allowing their staff members to attend the event.

The feedback from the young people since they returned has been outstanding. Here are some extracts from the many thank you letters we received in the Mission Council.

«Thank you to the Mission Council for supporting me on the best experience of my life»

«It was without doubt one of the most amazing weeks of my life.»

«I can honestly say I am a different person after attending the event (for the better.)»

«I feel much closer to the Marist family now and would like to get more involved if you can help me to do so..»

«It was an incredible experience, above and beyond what I expected. Very grateful I was able to experience.»

As you will read from the articles it was a very personal journey for each young person. They speak about how the



experience has enhanced their lives and how they truly internalized the themes of:

COMMUNITY – INTERIORITY – SOLIDARITY – MISSION

The Mission Council has already started to receive proposals of new projects they each would like to create and get involved in throughout the province. We are also delighted our young Marist Leaders would like to take on roles to help continue the programme for school leavers taking our first step into Marist Youth Ministry in Ireland.

We couldn't wish for a better outcome from such an event and are very excited to see what new mission and initiatives this creates in our Province of West Central Europe in the coming year.

Aisling Demaison

Director of Marist Mission

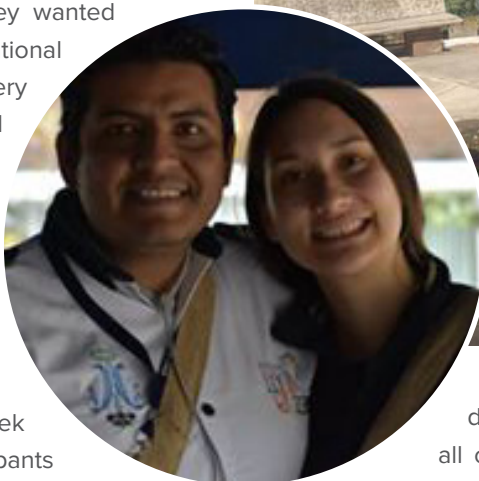


Jasmin Nimar

«The best thing was meeting so many different people from all over the world»

My Name is Jasmin and I currently work for the CMI Team in Germany. Within the province, I am also part of the European Solidarity Team.

Three years ago, I had the chance to attend the Gathering in Lyon and offered my help for the next meeting. Last year I was asked to help on the Animation Team in Guatemala, as they wanted to create an international Team. I was very excited because I had never worked on an animation team before. We had some skype meetings to prepare some of the work and met in Guatemala one week before the participants came. During the process of preparation, my excitement to attend the meeting in Guatemala grew! For me, the best things about these gatherings



is meeting so many different people from all over the world, who share the same vision and mission. Having good conversations but also sharing doubts with a group of people who are then not just coming from

different countries but also from different Marist branches is truly enriching.

During the sessions, each branch had the chance to tell us more about the key-points of living a Marist Life: Community, Interiority, Solidarity and Mission and how these are weaved together. It was very interesting how we as participants lived these values throughout the gathering. The whole Meeting gave me new energy for my personal work with young people but also it reminded me how much I appreciate being a part of the Marist world and how much I enjoy sharing life with the brothers. The feeling of having an international Family and having a home wherever I go strengthened in me.

My wish for the province is to have a provincial gathering of young people, to get to know each other better, but also strengthen the relationship with other European Marists, as we live so close together.





Ciaran McDermott

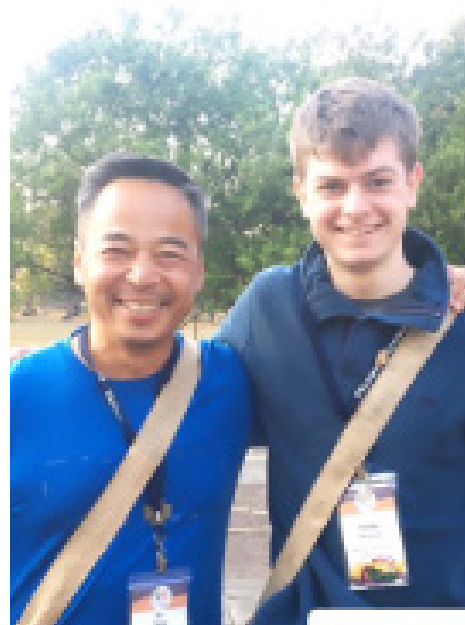
«I had no idea how much the experience would change my overall outlook on life and the greater world»

Before attending the event, I had little idea of what to expect. I had read all of the preparatory documents and schedule for the event, but I had no idea how much the experience would change my overall outlook on life and the greater world.

Previous to the event my Marist work and understanding, was entirely confined to Ireland, and my knowledge of the international Marist work was limited. However, that changed immediately upon my arrival at Centro Marista de Formación in Guatemala, where the event was held. I met with people from Australia, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Madagascar, South Africa, Europe, and America, to list only a fraction of the vastly diverse group of 188 Marists that attended. They had travelled with the Marist Brothers, the Marist Fathers, the Marist Sisters, and the Marist Missionary Sisters, all gathering to extend their

knowledge on the international work of the Marist, and to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be Marist.

The week was divided into four topics; Community, Solidarity, Interiority and Mission, each bringing fascinating experiences to the event, experiences that I will never forget. On Wednesday, as part of «community» we travelled to Antigua Guatemala in fraternities of about ten people. The city, coupled with the bus ride to Antigua was something unlike anything I had experienced before. The city gave me an insight into an otherworldly culture that I had never laid eyes on before. Children that should have been at school were working – selling handmade crafts to every passer-by; clothes, jewellery, wooden musical instruments, the list goes on. The cobbled streets were so rough that shaken and battered vehicles at the side of the road was the norm.



Thursday's solidarity experience was one of emotion, and motivation to make the world a much better place. Each fraternity travelled to a certain place, be it an old folks home, a school, or a home for victims of sexual abuse and trafficking, the message was the same. Marists voice solidarity by taking action, helping those who are most in need



in a bid to unite the world as an equal and happy place. My fraternity travelled to a primary school, Moisés Cisneros, which is situated about an hour and a half from Guatemala City. The school was established fifteen years ago by the Marist to provide education for children who would otherwise end up in a gang, or as other kinds of criminals. It is the only school in the locality and although the students don't progress to further education, they leave school knowing how to read and write, use a computer, and basic maths – all skills that their parents do not possess. The school holds approximately one hundred and twenty students, but numbers fluctuate from year to year. The project is a huge success, providing new opportunities to the young people of the surrounding shantytowns that were never previously even considered by the population.

Interiority is a lesser known topic, and was the subject of Friday's activities and discussions. The day was led mostly by Sr. Grace, the superior general of the Marist sisters, and was one of the most fascinating experiences of the week. Interiority is often overlooked in today's society, especially in the developed world, due to the never-ending race of daily life. It centres around the idea of understanding one's own true identity. Many of us are caught up in a life dominated by things like social media, work, and study, and lose sight of our true identity; who we really are.



It is only by taking a step back and listening to the world, that one can find out who they really are. I learned that some people go through life without ever knowing where they fit in to this world; working purely for money, or perhaps even purely for happiness. The meaning of life is different for everyone, but it can only be discovered by the person to whom it belongs, and until one understands their true identity and reason for being, they cannot complete any task to the fullest of their abilities. Reflecting on life and the world is a time of prayer. A time of silence where the presence of God and Mary can really be felt in one's body. Sister Grace's knowledge and wisdom truly amazed me, and her words will no doubt stay with me for the rest of my life.

The following day we explored the topic of «mission». Fr. John, superior general of the Marist Fathers gave a very powerful presentation of his experience on missions. Originally from New Zealand, Fr. John spent over thirty years (more than half of his life) on missions, providing help to those who need it. He explained that it was very important not to intrude. The goal was initially to listen to the locals, understand and befriend them, and then let them come for help. This method proved very effective as the government did not see them as

a threat. Fr. John worked mostly with AIDS patients, and was able to provide necessary medication to countless people. He explained that he formed very close bonds with the patients, to the extent that they felt part of his family. While listening to him speak, I developed an understanding of how important the Marist missions are to the future of humanity, and the positive impact they have on the lives of so many people in the developing world.

My image of being Marist has been dramatically enhanced since the event. I have a much greater understanding of the Marist's view on life, and the international work of the Marist. I feel a great sense of urgency to help the Marist missions in any way that I possibly can, and I intend on sharing my understanding of what it means to be Marist with the young Marist community in Ireland.

The experience showed me a completely different way of looking at life. Life is not centred around others, it is not centred around you, it is centred around the unity between you and the rest of the world. The seamless integration of your own dreams, interweaved with the needs of others. Weaving lives together through community, solidarity, interiority and mission, to create one world of peace, harmony and equality.

Ahmed Hamed Aly

«Last week was the best week of my life»

Last week was the best week of my life. Not just because I had the opportunity to travel to a whole different continent but for the spiritual and life changing experience I had during my time there. I didn't have much of an expectation before going to Guatemala. I was expecting something like my trip to Lyon, France but when I arrived it was completely different. There was a lot of people, from all over the world. I was shy at first, I didn't talk to many people but before I knew it, I was talking to everyone. You can feel the Marist spirit from every individual you meet which made me understand the true meaning of being a Marist to different people.

My favourite moments in Guatemala were connecting with my community group and learning more about the different members of my community. In that week, I've learned the different

lifestyles and motivation behind everyone and what it truly means to be a Marist to each of them. Another key moment was the speech by Father John from New Zealand. He was talking about his experience in helping homeless children in developing countries like Thailand and how he was kicked out of multiple countries for helping people. His stories really motivated me to do charitable work and help the homeless people and especially the youth. That experience added to my list of what it means to be a Marist, Humble.

A quote that Father John said that really stuck with me was, «Help yourself so you can help others». During my community gathering that day, I had time to really reflect and think over what that quote really means to me. I had struggled with mental health before and wanted to help others that are going through a tough time in their life, especially the youth. I began brain storming the different ideas that were flowing through my head.

I think the key to helping other people is firstly helping yourself. There's only so much I, as an individual, can do, but if I could help people who are having a hard time because of their mental health then together we can achieve more. A quote that I heard in my community was a quote by Rumi, «Silence is the language of God». This has inspired my idea to start a workshop for the Marist schools in Ireland that would allow the students to talk to someone and the main thing is to be silent and listen to the student. Helping one person is more valuable than helping ten people cause that one person you helped could help thousands of people.

Another idea I have for the Marist Youth



came to me when I recalled how clueless I was of the Marist community before becoming a Marist Leader. I started thinking of ways that would get the Marist Youth from our province to experience what it feels like to be a Marist Brother. My proposition is «day in the life of a Marist Brother», where the whole day entails you «becoming» a Marist Brother for a day and experience what its like to be a Marist Brother. This will give the youth an idea of what its like to be a Marist Brother and break any misconceptions they might have of being a Brother.

In conclusion, the week I spent in Guatemala has changed my life and perspective on what being a Marist is. I will always be grateful for the opportunity I've been given to go to the Guatemala Weaving Life gathering. I've made tons of new friends and had a lot of fun connecting with Marists from everywhere in the world and learning more about being a Marist.



Leigh Ellis

«You can not do the solidarity work without the interiority work»

From over 160 countries, with a diversity of culture and language, there of course, was a language barrier, yet for the young Marists -there was no problems communicating with each other during the International Youth Gathering in Guatemala!

The camaraderie, the songs, the smiles. You could find yourself at lunchtime sitting beside a Brazilian college student studying engineering on one side and a Bangladeshi Nun based in Jamaica completing her mission work - both living their modern Marist lives in 2019.

We spent the week together and shared stories of our personal lives at home, our Marist values and communities we are part of. Reflecting on the experience, I went to the Youth Gathering, not really knowing what to expect as a Teacher who works in a Marist School. I can now confidently say, with pride - I not only am a teacher, I am a Marist.

We learn about the different Marist Values and try to encourage our students to live these each day. The Value of «Family Spirit» is one particularly close to Moyle Parks heart and core ethos. It is evident right from the moment of walking into the building, the staff room conversations, the atmosphere in the classrooms, or even just walking through the school corridors. We are proud Marists who look out for each other and our Clondalkin community.

Being asked if I would like to take part in the Marist Youth Gathering this year was a real honour. I am lucky to be part of a fantastic team of teachers who run a Marist Leadership group in our school. We spend time with students looking at the concept of Leadership with the aim to try to support fellow students in our school community and the everyday teaching and learning environment.

A unique experience the Marist Leaders get to



participate in is the annual trip to L'Hermitage, where our founder Marcellin Champagnat began his mission. These tours help us gain an appreciation for the history of our Marist Founders and I feel that the trip to Guatemala made me feel more like a «Modern Marist» and can see the original thread of this Marist family and that the work is still being woven into the fabric of our everyday lives.

«You can not do the solidarity work without doing the interiority work»

This quote from a conversation with the Superior General of the Marist Brothers, Br. Ernesto resonates with me both as a teacher and as a Marist. I hope to bring this concept back to my students and the Marist Leaders. School life can be hectic and we can get lost in exam pressures and «the next project». With this we can forget the benefits of taking a moment and spending time to reflect. To simplify things, «One can't pour from an empty

jug». Encouraging our students and giving them the time and space to do this beneficial work will re energize everyone and create a more mindful approach to our everyday lives. Giving the same time and respect as we usually would to our traditional subjects and exam pressures to a moment of reflection and mindfulness with help to create a respect for the benefits of interiority and mindfulness. Spending ten minutes, unplugging from the digital world and connecting with ourselves on that deeper level would only serve to create more mindful students and Marists. During Superior General Sister Georgeanne's speech she reminded us that, «Silence is the language of God». This really spoke to me on a deeper level and made me reflect on my practice as an Art Teacher. I feel lucky to teach such a subject that allows for these quiet moments of reflection and personal response.

Reflecting on such a unique experience, at the Youth Festival, a smile has come to my face. I am reminded of the Moyle Park Summer School Language College students I have had the pleasure of teaching and how lucky I was getting to meet even more of our International family.

I hope to try to bring this sense of community and family to my school in Clondalkin and plan to achieve this through more projects and communication with both our Irish Sister schools and International family.

Casa Alianza

During one of the days we got to go on a trip to see Casa Alianza. Casa Alianza does not get any financial support from the Guatemalan government and runs on charitable donations from schools in Canada. It is a shelter for young girls who may have experienced sexual trafficking and abuse. It is a safe gated community that gives these girls



support and somewhere to raise their babies. The youngest girl who had a baby was just nine years old.

Meeting the residents of Casa Alianza, the language barrier was enhanced by the feelings of shyness at the beginning. We played games with the girls, sang songs and they even performed a Zumba dance routine for us.

We were invited to have a tour of the center and and got to see their bedrooms. Many girls had the same drawings on their walls that reminded me of when I was a little girl. The same hobbies, the same dreams. Despite coming from such hardship, these young girls still had hope and aspirations to make their lives better. Casa Alianza is protecting these girls and giving them a safe place to stay and learn new skills.

Their teacher Luiz was like a father figure, who gave the girls opportunity's to showcase their talents and present speeches. He was respected by all and a friend to everyone. His kindness was inspiring and I aspire to bring this into my own teaching and relationships with the young people I have the privilege to work with every day.

A special memory of this excursion with always be the moments chatting with the

girls in between the activities. This is where the connections were made and memories formed. «Spot the Irish girl was a fun game and the girls had fun examining my freckles and red hair! These memories will stay with me for my life and I will forever be grateful for these girls sharing their home, stories, talents and smiles with us.

It's my wish to give something back to these girls to thank them for sharing their lives with us. They are setting up a new school classroom and hoping to include a library for the girls. I hope to run a fundraiser to raise some much needed funds for this worthy charity with the Moyle Park Marist Leaders this year.

Since returning, I have been inspired to bring some of these themes into my schemes of work with the Art Department. The First Years are currently working on a Human Rights Graphic Design project to display in a school exhibit. We have made some cross-curricular links with their CSPE teachers.

Surrounded by the mountainous landscape, the environment and natural heritage and culture of GUatemala, it was not a struggle to see inspiration everywhere. The landscape, colour and rainbow of textile offerings, everywhere seemed to have a hidden gem!

It was truly an artists dream! I'm excited to create some personal work based on my Guatemalan experiences in a variety of Media such as print, paint, textiles and sculpture. I gained a lot personally and has refreshed my love for travel!

Making links and forming new friendships with other Marist provinces and my fellow Irish Marist leadership coordinators has been invaluable and is leading us on to many conversations and ideas are forming for future projects for our students and school communities.

Marist week is almost like Christmas for us in Moyle Park and it has been a pleasure to create collaborative community Art experiences each year. These large scale, multi-participant installations have become some of the highlights for me for both my practice as an Artist and Teacher.

Over the course of four years, each member of our M.P.C family have been involved in an Art project and these experiences have not only enhanced the school environment and hallways, but also provided opportunities to live our Family Spirit values and share a creative collaborative experience.

Moving forward, my goal is to expand our community Art Projects to our sister schools, Marian College and Marist College, Athlone.

Seeing the traditional gigantic paper kite suspended from the ceiling of Casa Alianza has really inspired me to bring this concept home, and I hope to work with the three Irish schools to create an Art experience where the school communities will create a large Art installation in their school. Community Art has had an incredible impact on the classroom, on our staff and students and neighbourhoods.

Returning home I feel re energized and inspired from this incredible trip. My respect for the Marist community and the worldwide work and missions has only further enhanced my enthusiasm for being a Marist Leader Coordinator.

Creating these Art pieces together represent the bonds between our Marist family and seeing them in the school environments will remind us that we are part of something bigger! We are Marist!

Fuad Usman

«I hope to continue spending time with the elderly now that I am home»

My initial thought of going to Guatemala was that it was going to be based on a lot of group and community work which was right in a way, but it was a lot more religious than I expected, especially because I do not share the same faith as the rest. Nevertheless, I felt welcomed and accepted and could be excused as they performed their worship. Being that I came from a Marist school I was humbly accepted.

I'm grateful to have made lots of memorable experience in just a short time being there. The key experience for me was the solidary trip with my group. We visited Villa Emus an elderly home located in the city of Guatemala. The home housed 8 women and 5 men. Most of the elders were found on the streets left to die and the volunteers brought them in, fed them and took care of them which I thought was remarkable. I got to speak to a few of the elders with the help of a translator by my side. When time was up and we were about to leave, a few of the elders spoke up saying that they wished we stayed longer. It was clear that all they wanted was company, which warmed my heart. This is what being Marist is about. I hope to continue spending time with the elderly now that I am home.

I learned lot from all the speakers that attended the festival, skills that can be shared with my own province. I learn about the need to be reflect, to ponder, to be conscious about oneself. In a busy world we often forget to do these things, also that we need to be silent in order to listen to others and listen to ourselves. The act of being of service to others was very much a consensus with all the speakers. Their stories are both scary and inspiring



and the same time. I feel these qualities are in shortage within the Marist schools in Ireland. It is something we can and will improve on.

I've notice that the Marist community in Ireland is not as strong as with the other countries that were represented in the festival. The extent of the Marist community was only made clear to me during last three years of secondary school. One my ideas that is currently in the drafting process is Marist exchange. The idea is that every few years or so, preferable Transition year students could exchange with other students from other Marists schools around the world. The idea is to build up great community with Marist schools around the world and students could share their experiences when they return.

Being from a Marist Brothers school, it was natural that I knew who the Marist Brothers were and their work. I was not aware that there were other branches in the society of Mary; Marist Fathers, Marist Sisters and Marist Missionary Sisters. I learned the importance of Interiority, Community Solidary and Mission in the Marist Family and how all these are needed to be put together.

My ideas for the Marist leadership program are simple, they should adopt these for principles mentioned above. They should engage in reflecting, silence and meditation, they should build a strong community in the school and outside the school, engaged in acts of solidarity, fundraising, tidy town, visiting the sick, visiting the elderly home and feeding the homeless. My task for the Marist Leaders in Transition year is to work for a charity of their choice for a good period of their school year. My wish is they will stay with their chosen charity after this and to inspire youngers years to be of service too. Personally, I intend to implement all the skills that I have acquired during that wonderful week. I also would highly encourage anyone to attend the next one, in two years' time.



Matthias Spanrad

«Be open-minded for new encounters and for new experiences»

What were my expectations before the Marist's youth gathering, «Weaving Life», in Guatemala?

I have to admit: None.

One Sunday a few weeks ago I started my travelling to Dublin and afterwards to Guatemala. But I had just one thing in mind «baggage»: Be open minded! Open minded for new encounters, open minded for new experiences. And, finally, open minded for new life oportunities!

In retrospect I have to say that this was the best way to meet the Gathering and the Marist family. I returned to Europe with a lot of new and grateful perspectives. About our life here in Europe, but especially the life in other cultures too.

For me there were two impressive adventures: To learn the Marists more as a very, very large and fascinating family with

all the different participants.

And to get a different view on other cultures and their challenges. It has been the numerous conversations I had with other members – no matter from Europe, South America or Australia. I have learned to have a different view on the conditions in the different regions where the Marists are working. But as I have seen the strong merger in the different Marist's regions, for example in Mexico, I just starting to think about Marist youth here in Europe. It's important to have a view outside in the world, but just like that it's important to have a view within Europe.

The security and cohesion we have in Europe is not of course a given– we have to work on that absolutely! And that's a strong recognition of the gathering: we need marist youth projects in Europe absolutely!



Therefore I hope to realize the beginnings of such ideas we have just initiated in Guatemala. For example the idea of European Marist football competition. There is just a refreshing idea needed – like the «Weaving life» in Guatemala!

Matthias Spanrad

Mitch Lindsay

«Interiority stresses the importance of a person's need for time to reflect, for silence and taking care of ones wellbeing»

Expectations

First of all, I was delighted to be asked to represent Western Europe at the Gathering. I had been fortunate enough to visit Guatemala before and absolutely loved the place. So, it was great to be returning again. I had followed Weaving Life on Twitter prior to the event and they had been posting information and articles on the gathering and the meaning of it. I had developed a good understanding of the 4 elements of the event, Interiority, Solidarity, Community and Mission. I was looking forward to meeting people from different countries and cultures who were part of the Marists. I am able to speak some Spanish and this helped me greatly getting to know the Central and South American groups. My Spanish improved vastly over the week! What I wasn't expecting was the warmth and openness of the people I met. Everyone was incredibly friendly and eager to chat and learn about your culture and country. It was great to meet so many new people and learn so much about their work as Marists in their part of the world. We were split into communities of ten on Day 1. In these groups we discussed the events of the day. Here I talked with people from Bangladesh, Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Canada. It was in this group that I got a very deep understanding of the work of Marists, whether they be Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Teachers, lay people or Marist students. Those group meetings were incredibly insightful and I learned an incredible amount about the work of Marists throughout the world.



Being Marist

From my perspective, I have had plenty of exposure of being Marist from an Irish point of view, as both a pupil of a Marist School and now a Teacher. I am involved in the Marist Leadership program, which has proved a great success. What struck me most about the idea of «Being Marist» during the gathering was that no matter the culture or language of a Marist, the values and vision remain the same. I was able to listen and learn so much from many other Marists at the event, but what I also learned was that the ethos and values remain true no matter where in the world the person was from.

The values present at the gathering were «Interiority», «Solidarity», «Community» and «Mission». It was acknowledged throughout the gathering that individuals

would define themselves as stronger in certain values than others. That did not mean to say you ignored the other values but acknowledge that you may be better at utilising certain values over others. Each value was explored for a day at the event. As a teacher, I found myself most engaged in the solidarity and community values. I discovered upon talking to other Marist teachers that this was the case also. Solidarity is the ability to help those around you who are in need. That need may be food, shelter or education and solidarity is the value inherent in a person who sees the need in another person and acts upon it. However, I also learned apart the importance of interiority. Interiority is a person been aware of one's mindfulness and wellbeing. Interiority stresses the importance of a person's



need for time to reflect, for silence and for taking care of one's wellbeing. Solidarity and Community cannot take place if the person is not taking care of one's well being.

Father John explored this idea when talking about his Mission work in Myanmar and Thailand in what was a very engaging discussion. He said the pressure in providing solidarity and a community for the destitute in both countries was immense. He said that a person could not last longer than 12 months in the Mission if they didn't take care of their interiority. They would simply burn out. He stressed that one cannot successfully commit to Solidarity and Community without having



a strong Interiority. This resonated with myself and many other fellow Marist teachers who I discussed the idea with consequently. It is a valuable insight that I will keep from the gathering.

Marist Youth Leadership

Brother Ernesto's talk on «Mission» was very interesting. He disclosed that the Marist Mission had been discussed with Pope Francis at a recent meeting in Rome with him and several of the Marist General Council. Pope Francis reiterated the need to engage the youth of Europe and the World in the Marist values. Myself and

Matthias Spanrad had discussed projects to engage the youth of Europe throughout the week but following Bro. Ernesto's talk we were convinced of the importance of developing the Marist Youth network throughout Europe. We have created idea that we hope could contribute to developing the ties between the Marist countries across Europe. In relation to Ireland, the great work of Marist Leadership continues. On an Irish level, myself and Leigh Ellis are looking to start fund raising projects for Casa Alianza in Guatemala. A centre who takes care of young girls on a permanent basis.



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PROVINCE MISSION COUNCIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2019

MARCH

- 8TH - Mission Council Meeting Dublin
- 21ST – 24TH - Province Pilgrimage to Hermitage
- 29TH - European Solidarity Meeting

APRIL

- 8TH – 10TH - European Mission Council (MEC) meeting Athens
- 23ST – 26TH - Provincial Chapter Germany

JUNE

- 6TH - Champagnat Day celebrations
- 11TH - European Mission Council (MEC) meeting Barcelona
- 14TH – 16TH - Province Gathering Guardamar Spain
- 16TH - Mission Council Meeting Guardamar

JULY

- 7TH – 13TH - European Accompaniment Programme Rome - 5 Province places

AUGUST

- 5TH – 11TH - European Marist Animators Programme
Barcelona - 8 Province places

SEPTEMBER

- 12TH – 15TH - Marist Leadership Programme Province Gathering Hermitage

OCTOBER

- 7TH -11TH - Marist Week Ireland