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MARIST BROTHERS

WEST-CENTRAL EUROPE



BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

We are still inspired by the words of the Provincial Chapter of 2013: “Be communion”. In our daily lives we are often “communion” with ourselves and with those around us. And it is a fascinating question to ask how we are “communion” with the Word of God in our everyday lives. The Good News about Jesus of Nazareth, which we read in the Gospels, opens the word of God for us. In everything he says and does, Jesus always brings us back to God whom He calls His heavenly Father. He affirms that He himself fulfils the Word of God, given to the Jewish people.

COMMUNION

Psalm 12 can lead us in our reflection on our “communion” with the Word of God. The psalmist asks himself which words are bland and deceitful, which are the true Word. The psalmist is surrounded by people “with flattering lips” and “glib tongues”. This description not only expresses what is *on the outside*; it also expresses that which is *within him*, which moves him away from the Word of God.

Why does this editorial talk about our “communion” with the Word of God? Does our Bulletin not exist to communicate what lives in us and among us, and what is happening in the Province and what our concerns are?

The question can be asked. The answer is simple: the Word of God does not exist outside man, it is an integral part of man. To suggest otherwise would be terrible. The Word of God is born in and among men. The Word is revealed to us. It becomes public, visible, and intelligible in and through our living together. Throughout his life, man is invited, through all human actions, to understand and share the Word, so that it can be for us the Living Word.

In this sense, this editorial can refer to “communion” with the Word of God. The articles, the news, the opinions in this Bulletin are transformed, if they are the echo of the Word of God. Then the words that you read in this Bulletin become precious.

Verse 7 of Psalm 12 says: “The words of the Lord are as clear as crystal, as genuine as silver refined seven times in the furnace”.

We immediately notice the number seven. It calls to mind the whole of humanity. It is the maximum. It is impossible to be more attentive to the Word. His Word, the Word revealed to us, must, like silver, undergo all purifications. That means that the Word must be received many times in our heart so as to be understood. Lived experiences, words shared with others are not automatically identifiable as the Word of God. This depends also on our state of mind, on whether we can genuinely receive and express the Word.

As much as is possible, our world and we ourselves would be different, if we could be aware of the “communion” between our words and actions and the Word which has been revealed.

I wish and hope that you can read the articles in this Bulletin in that spirit. In this way, we will be able to say: “What marvels are worked in us!”

Happy reading.

Brother Jacques Scholte

Dear Brothers and Marist Friends,

During the past year the Marist Institute has focused on the Montagne story as the first part of our three-year preparation for the Bicentenary of the Institute and the XXII General Chapter, which will take place in September, 2017. The Montagne experience was an event that crystalized the thinking of Marcellin, the newly ordained young priest, to realize his dream to found an institute of teaching brothers.

The second year of preparation, which began on 23rd July, 2015, highlights the Fourvière pledge, which took place on 23rd July, 1816, when a group of twelve newly ordained young men climbed the hill of Fourvière in Lyon to dedicate themselves to found a “holy Congregation of Mary-ists.” In time the group became known as “Marists.”



Marcellin was a member of a group of idealistic young men. They had all experienced the effects of the French Revolution and undertook seminary formation in the last years of Napoleon’s reign. Their final years were overshadowed by the defeat of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in France.

What is interesting about this group is that they were not seeking to restore the pre-Revolutionary Church, but rather to learn from the mistakes of the past, and to build a new Church with the face of Mary: a Church which would be humbler, which would engage with “the men of our time” with mercy, understanding, and respect, and which would seek to make the whole world Marist.

Marcellin Champagnat was part of this group, and was attracted to the vision of an Institute with many branches. As we know, Father Champagnat insisted on the need for a branch of teaching brothers as a result of his own lack of an early education, and the struggles he experienced on his long journey to priesthood. He also wanted to establish schools with teachers who cared for their students and who would provide a good education and solid religious instruction.

Father Stanley Hosie, an Australian Marist Father who wrote a life of Father Colin entitled *Anonymous Apostle* (1967), described Father Champagnat as the “stormy petrel” of the Lyon group (p. 40). I had never heard this reference when I read the book, but presumed it referred to someone who could disrupt a group, be a source of trouble or a bit provocative. This striking phrase has been repeated in a number of writings about Father Champagnat’s role in this early group of Marists. The phrase has stuck in my mind over the years, partly as it is a rather colourful description of Father Champagnat, and partly as I have always felt it was a bit overstated.

A few weeks ago I read an article in *The Tablet*, an English Catholic journal, where the author wrote a description of the bird which is called the storm (or stormy) petrel:



Petrel is a distortion of the name Peter; these are St. Peter's birds. They feed by hovering above the water, their feet lightly dancing on the waves, while they peck at food on the surface. This movement reminded people of St. Peter attempting to walk on water. Fishermen also called them Mother Carey's Chickens, based on a corruption of Mater Cara, the Virgin Mary. Perhaps because storm petrels seem to revel in stormy weather (hence the name) and flutter lightly over the most tumultuous waves, they brought some comfort to sailors. ... Our ancestors saw more than a member of the family *Hydrobatidae*, they also saw their faith in all its mystery.

Colwell, Mary (*The Tablet*, 20th June, 2015).

Birds of paradise, pp.9-10

Father Champagnat might not have walked on water, but he had to deal with many storms in his life as a seminarian, curate and founder. Like Saint Peter, he exercised leadership in challenging times. I was intrigued, though, to discover that the storm petrel has another name, related to Mary as the caring mother. As a founding member of the Society of Mary, he was attracted to establishing a different kind of church. In the words of Brother Michael Green:

The founding Marists dreamed of a new church, or a new way of being church. Intuitively they eschewed the rigorist moral theology of their seminary training. This did not accord with the God they had come to know in their hearts. They saw no future for a church that was punitive in its injunctions, or privileged in its positioning. They aligned themselves with the strand of French spirituality and ecclesiology that was of the heart, that taught of an immanent God who sought to come alive in the hearts of ordinary people, and impelled them to love. They longed for a church centred on this God. They intuited that to build such a church, their priorities in ministry should be to forgive, to reconcile, to include, to teach, to nurture, to sow seeds of hope, and to be tireless and selfless in doing so. Their model and inspiration was Mary, mother of mercy.

Green, Michael (MSA Newsletter 9, 21st July, 2015).

Letter from the National Director

In recent years we have (rightly) highlighted our call to present the Marian Face of the Church. We know from sharing with those who have worked with us and who have come to know us in different roles and relationships, that many people are attracted to our way of working, praying and relating. In recent years we have made valuable efforts to articulate this in terms of a contemporary Marist spirituality (*Water from the Rock*), and to capture it in various writings and resources.

The Fourvière pledge was the moment when a group of young men made a solemn commitment to make their dream a reality. One of that group, Marcellin Champagnat, had a specific role in the project – the foundation of a branch of teaching brothers. The image of the stormy petrel does not quite work for me as a description of Marcellin. When I imagine him with his group of fellow seminarians, I see him more as quietly insistent about his dream of a branch of teaching brothers, rather than as someone who was difficult or provocative. The image of this curious sea-bird, however, highlights two other aspects of his personality, reflecting the bird's two names, related to Saint Peter and Our Lady. Marcellin was clearly a leader, and had to navigate difficult waters in his life as priest and founder. But he led "in the way of Mary," leaving a tradition of leadership that was pragmatic, focused, attentive, but firm when trying to realise his vision.

As we embark on the second year of preparation for the Bicentenary in 2017, and join spiritually with the other Marist branches, perhaps we can reflect on these two aspects of our own Founder's personality and the personalities of the other Marist Founders. I am highlighting the importance of leadership but also inviting us to reflect on the ways our founders exercised their leadership. They realised their vision for a Marist Society but led in a way that reflected a different set of values from what they saw in their Society, and in many parts of the Church of their time.

During the year ahead we will have opportunities to reflect on the meaning of the pledge for us today. While the language of the Fourvière pledge may not reflect our own ways of thinking and praying, the vision to establish a different kind of Church, highlighting the values we identify in Mary, our God mother, is as relevant today as it was on 23rd July 1816. In this way, Fourvière becomes an appropriate icon for our second year of preparation for our own Bicentenary.

Sincerely,

**Brother Brendan Geary,
Provincial**



1816 - FOURVIERE - 2016

In view of the commemoration in 2016 of the consecrations of the first Marists in the church in Fourvière, the editorial staff asked Father Jan Snijders s.m. to write an article on this event. It is with great pleasure that we publish the first instalment of his work. The second instalment will be published in the Bulletin in December 2015. Jan, thank you for this fascinating critique that you have provided us with.

On Saturday 23 July 2016, the Marists around the entire world will remember that 200 years ago our Founders took the first official steps to create what they then called the Society of Mary or even the Order of “Mariists”. The word “order” rapidly disappeared and the difficult expression “Mariists” was simplified to “Marists”.

WHERE DID THAT COME ABOUT?

In France, at Lyons. To the west of the town, near the Saône, is a steep hill. On the large plateau at the top of the hill, long before the time of Jesus Christ, the Romans established a city called *Lugdunum*. At its centre was a large open market, the forum. The name Fourvière comes from the Latin words for old forum – *forum vetus*. A cable car near the Cathedral of Saint-Jean takes you there in a few minutes. There you will find a large church, not particularly beautiful and a little flashy. It did not even exist in 1816. When you are opposite the church you notice on the right a small chapel leaning against the building. It has been there since 1200 and it was there that this consecration took place, in front of the miraculous statue of Notre-Dame de Fourvière.

WHO WERE THEY?

A dozen young men in long black cassocks had climbed the hill (there was no cable car then). At least three of them are known: the group leader Jean-Claude Courville, Marcellin Champagnat, and Jean-Claude Colin. Less well-known, but seen in old photos or mentioned in old memos are Etienne Terraillon and Etienne Déclas. The others are difficult to identify. They played no part in our story after that.



WHERE WERE THEY FROM?

They were seminarians. Students at the large Saint-Irenée Seminary, a half hour's walk from the Cathedral, near the Rhône. Five or six of them had been ordained priests the previous evening. The others still had one or more years to do.

WHAT WERE THEY DOING AT THE STATUE OF THE VIRGIN?

They sang, the leader of the group gave a moving speech. Together, in a loud voice, they read a declaration which they then all signed individually. Perhaps a few more words, a song, some prayers and the ceremony was over. The newly ordained priests said their goodbyes and went to their different parishes. The students went back to the seminary. In total the whole event had lasted hardly thirty minutes.

WHAT WAS THE DECLARATION THAT WAS READ AND SIGNED BY EVERYONE?

In short, the declaration consisted of a promise to set up as soon as possible “the pious congregation of the “Mary-ists” and to consecrate their lives, their being and their all to the “Society of the Holy Virgin Mary”. They must have felt very young as they found it necessary to add that they did not make this promise “lightly or as children”! No, they were extremely serious and very ready, even to die as martyrs. That may seem a little melodramatic to us, but not to them!

Déclas could recall that he was ten years old when in 1793/1794 during the French Revolution a so-called “Reign of Terror” was rife. The others were too little at that time, but they had heard of it. Colin’s parents, while fleeing, were victims of revolutionary gangs, and he regarded them as martyrs. Courveille’s parents risked their lives by hiding a much sought-after miraculous statue. Champagnat’s parents at first supported the Revolution, but put themselves in danger by hiding recalcitrant priests. The Vicar General responsible for the Seminary was imprisoned but escaped and fled to Switzerland. For a period of twenty-five years, thousands of priests died in the penal colony of Cayenne or on the ships on which they were deported. Martyrdom was always a possibility, and the future was anything but safe.

WHY A NEW CONGREGATION?

Seminarians are in the Seminary to become priests, but many also come with a personal ideal. Marcellin wanted to consecrate himself to the education of peasant children, Colin dreamed of some form of monastic life in solitude, silence and prayer. But in September 1814, Jean-Claude Courveille, a seminarian from the Seminary at Le Puy arrived: His wider vision quickly won over the little group. The philosophers of 18th Century Enlightenment, the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars had profoundly worn down the traditional faith in France. The first mission which included their personal ideals was to re-establish the faith in the anticlerical society of the time. Was it not of this time that Jesus had said “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18, 8). Over the course of the preceding centuries, the Jesuits had taken on this task. Courveille suggested a supernatural inspiration from Mary to create a Society carrying her name which would save the Church at this critical time. The passion of Courveille won over this little group who called themselves “Mariists”. The promise of 23 July 1816 confirmed their consecration to this ideal.



FOURVIERE PLEDGE

CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST MARISTS TO OUR LADY OF FOURVIERE

All for the greater glory of God
and the greater honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.

We the undersigned,
striving to work together for the greater glory of God
and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus,
assert and declare
our sincere intention and firm will
of consecrating ourselves
at the first opportunity
to founding the pious congregation of Mariists.

That is why by the present act and our signatures,
in so far as we can,
we irrevocably dedicate ourselves
and all our goods
to the Society of the blessed Virgin.

We do this not childishly
or lightly or for some human motive
or the hope of material benefit,
but seriously, maturely, having taken advice,
having weighed everything before God,
solely for the greater Glory of God
and the honour of Mary, Mother of the Lord Jesus.

We pledge ourselves
to accept all sufferings, trials, inconveniences,
and if needs be, torture,
because we can do all things in Christ Jesus
who strengthens us and to whom we hereby promise fidelity
in the bosom of our holy mother the Roman Catholic Church,
cleaving with all our strength
to its supreme head the Roman Pontiff
and to our most reverend bishop, the ordinary,
that we may be good ministers of Jesus Christ,
nourished by the words of faith
and by the wholesome teaching which by his grace we have received.

We trust
that under the reign of our most Christian kind,
the friend of peace and religion,
this institute will shortly come to light
and we solemnly promise that we shall spend ourselves
and all we have
in saving souls
in every way
under the very august name of the Virgin Mary
and with her help.

And may the holy and immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary be praised.

Amen.

COMMUNITY ANIMATORS WORKSHOP

EMBRACING OUR REALITY

From 19-21 June 2015 a workshop for the Community Animators took place at the Retreat Centre Berg Moriah in the Schönstatt area, near Koblenz. The invitation came from Brother Brendan and over 20 Brothers from the various countries of the Province attended. The workshop was facilitated by Sr. Catherine Darby from Great Britain. Under her guidance we reflected together on the spiritual needs of the older Brothers and how we can improve their spiritual care.



The Workshop opened on the Friday evening with a Powerpoint presentation from Bro. Brendan. Starting with the Vatican Council Documents of particular importance to us, viz. *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Perfectae Caritatis* he called to mind the post-Council period and its dramatic events: the number of Brothers in the Institute in 1965 was 9,500 and now stands at 3,500. In our own Province when it was established in the year 2000 there were 256 Brothers, while today there are 120 and we reckon by 2022 this number will be between 50 and 70. This obviously raises issues and questions regarding leadership, our identity, new vocations, our communities, prayer life and mission.



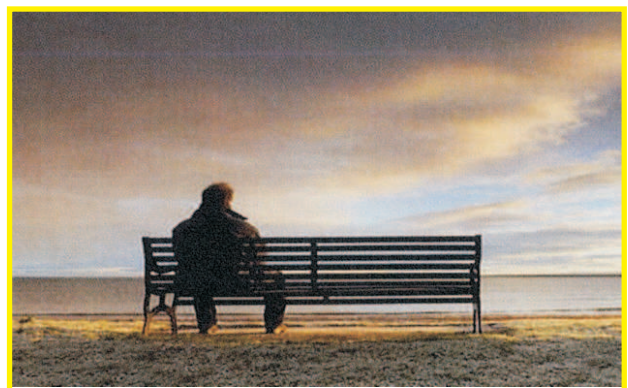
On the one hand we are experiencing within the Institute a serious reduction in the number of Brothers together with an ageing profile; on the other hand we are witnessing the strengthening of the co-operation of the laity, including particularly young people, which the Brothers support in the various countries of Asia, Africa and South America

Let's not give in to despondency and resignation but rather see ourselves invited to live consciously the Easter mystery of the death and Resurrection. While our faith is challenged, we have the assurance that God is with us on our journey. So Pope Francis, in this year of the Consecrated Life, invites us to look into the past with gratitude, to engage the present consciously and to embrace the future with hope. "See, I make everything new..."

The presentation of the workshops was the responsibility of Sr. Catherine. Her skill as moderator and Powerpoint presenter was both convincing and encouraging. This was already clear with the morning prayer on Saturday and Sunday when Sr. Catherine invited us through impressive pictures, music and moving texts invited us to open ourselves to the Spirit. Is it possible on occasion in my own community to revamp the routine of daily prayer? A number of the participants posed themselves these and similar questions.

THANKS - GROWTH - GIFTEDNESS....

These were the concepts that Sr. Catherine before us. She quoted, for example, John O'Donohue: "Be aware



of the wonderful experiences of your life, of the gifts you have received in your life – so many things have been gifted to you.” What is there in my life to be grateful for? For my parents, my friends, happy experiences? Sr. Catherine spoke of the “Theology of the Retired” i.e. to draw back from the hubbub and alone or with a trusted companion to think over one’s life and give thanks, to be happy for everything that has been given to me. *“You, Lord, are in my heart, in my understanding, in my whole life: your presence envelops me and brings me peace.”*



The two men on the road to Emmaus have lost hope. The Risen one joins them as a companion but they fail to recognise him. Is this not also our daily experience? He can open our eyes through his word and sacrament. He puts to us the question which he had put to those in need, *“What do you want me to do for you?”*

At another point, Sr. Catherine produced a variety of pictures of doors and invited each participant to choose one. The door, a symbol of our home, our homeland... Arising from this we spoke in small groups about our respective choices of door and made the rewarding discovery that each one’s choice of door expressed their thoughts on life and their relationship to their fellow humans.



Carl Jung, the well-known Psychotherapist, listed the following if one is to grow old with dignity (a lifelong learning process):

- To accept death as part of one’s life;
- To spend time reflecting on one’s life;

- To use one’s time and energy responsibly;
- To rid one’s self of a dominant ego;
- To bring the contradictions in our thoughts into harmony with our lives;
- To make sense of my life as it is.

In his final book Henry Nouwen wrote, *“Am I happy to pray? Do I enjoy praying? Do I make time for myself to pray? – If I am to be honest, the answer is “no” to all three questions.”* What an honest assessment on the part of a master of the spiritual life! As such it is an encouragement to us all.



In conclusion Sr. Catherine showed us the “jewels of dementia” in their various shapes and colours: the white diamond, green emerald, blue sapphire, the red ruby, the pearl in its shell... *“Put your love into life and when the moment arrives set your life to embrace death with dignity.”*

DANCE YOUR FINAL YEARS...

Finally, on Sunday we were able with both serenity and humour to meditate on texts and pictures which Sr. Catherine showed us of the Care Home for the Elderly in which she works and is there for them. The texts and pictures speak for themselves: here are two texts:

Henry Newman: *“Lord, accompany us throughout the day till the shadows get longer and evening comes. Till finally work ceases and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then Lord, in your loving mercy, lead us to a safe place of peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

Madeleine Delbrel: *“If you go to the ends of the earth you will find traces of God. But when you yourself go into the ground you will find God personally.”*

What can we learn from this Workshop with Sr. Catherine? It is very important that we nurture in our communities and atmosphere of wellbeing and goodwill. The elder Brothers pursue feelings of gratitude and confidence. Naturally there is no recipe for

how to relate with our Brothers. But there is a life after work and productivity and so we ask ourselves with our Brothers: What gives my (our) life meaning today? Luke 2:41-50 can help us here.

At the end Brother Brendan expressed his sincere thanks to Sr. Catherine as well as to the technicians, translators and organisers who had contributed to the success of the workshop.

Brother Winfried Schreieck



MARIST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The 2015 Marist Leadership Institute was held in Maryland at the Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Centre in July. I, along with other representatives from Ireland and Germany, were invited by Brother Dominick Pujia to join the Marists from the Province of the United States to share our thoughts and reflections on working as Marist administrators and leaders in our schools today. The setting was peaceful and beautiful, with rolling green hills and wildlife right on the doorstep. The facilities in the centre were excellent and the staff were so friendly and accommodating. On the first afternoon, Brother Dominick welcomed us warmly and reminded us that the best way to be ready for the future is to invent it. He then introduced Brother Dan Riordan who hosted the first session. Brother Dan explained to us that the symbol for this Marist Leadership Institute was fire and we were being encouraged to hear the voices of the fire. This was the message that came from the II Marist International Mission Assembly held in Nairobi in September 2014 where all present were urged to move forward and “hope our lives and witness will be like flames that ignite life so fiercely that you cannot stare at them without blinking, nor approach them without catching fire” (Eduardo Galeano).

This Assembly also set out the dreams of the

Marists for the future, which were that people will recognise that we Marists of Champagnat are **Mystics, Prophets** and men and women who live in **Communion**. Brother Dan related these three themes to the life of Marcellin Champagnat (Mystics – La Valla, Prophets – Montagne, Com-



munion – Fourvière), and how the lead up to the bicentennial anniversary of the formation of the Marist Brothers in January 1817 incorporates these themes. Something that struck a chord with me was that Brother Dan remarked that we might be the only Gospel that our students may read and the only mystic presence in their lives.

The next morning we had prayers in the Chapel and some time reflecting on the thought of how will people know that I am living a "Marist" life. Mrs Maureen Hagan then hosted session two and introduced the theme of Communion and bringing people together. She explained that the three

times and is attuned to the heart of God and asked us where do we want to be in five years' time? He explained that while we are always asked to "think outside the box"; we have to realise that the box is our traditions and not always a bad thing. This message resonated with a lot of



concepts of Communion are bonding, shared pain and celebration. We personally recalled a moment in our lives when the depth of the experience brought us together very quickly with others and the different ways that we celebrate in our community. She encouraged us to recognise that the Marist Charism is a gift – not a history but a living, breathing story that is being written now and to ask ourselves how do we pass on the Charism to our students and the whole school body. Finally Maureen advised that we must invite everyone involved in the school community to events, celebrate all the time and make Marist celebrations memorable so people will want to go!

In the afternoon, Brother Don Bisson facilitated session three entitled "New Marists in Mission" and started by giving us time to note down our own experience of God in our lives. He then explained the dream of people recognising that Marists are mystics and that we are not to be frightened by the word "Mystic". He called Marcellin himself "the Ordinary Mystic" and that he saw God in the beauty of everything.

The next morning we had the final session, which was hosted by Brother John Klein and was on the theme of being a Marist Prophet. He described a prophet as someone who reads the signs of the

us and reminded us that we need to be rooted in the best of our traditions.

All too soon it was the last morning and after a lovely and engaging send off from the Provincial, Brother Patrick McNamara, we parted ways. It was a privilege to be present among such dynamic and spiritual Marists and on behalf of the Irish and German guests I wish to express my gratitude for such a fantastic opportunity and to thank everyone involved for their hospitality and kindness to us all. My lasting reflection from this experience will be that little things can become great in love.



**Christine Kilcoyne,
Moyle Park College**

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA OF SPIRITUALITY

Some eighteen months ago, Brothers, employees, volunteers and participants in the projects at Westerhelling in Nijmegen began a process of reflecting on the future of these projects.

In the spirit of our last Provincial Chapter, which was held in 2013, and of several documents which have been published in our Institute in recent years, Brothers and lay people had a first meeting in January 2014 to talk about the current and future mission of the Brothers in the Netherlands and, in particular, Nijmegen.

Clearly, such reflections about the future have many different aspects. In this article I will focus on the inspiring and initiating role within the projects, which, for the most part, has hitherto been carried out by the Brothers and which is to be handed over to someone from outside our Institute.

Defining this role in a job description is a difficult task. In these past eighteen months there have been very interesting and challenging conversations with many people, which set a process in motion – a process of reflection, deliberation, and, finally, the decision to appoint an *employee responsible for training and development in the area of spirituality*. It is a position with four pillars:

- To deepen and broaden the Marist (Marial) spirituality;
- To live, and respond to, the words, “Attentive Presence”;
- To continue to develop the mission of the Brothers in the Netherlands;
- To promote spiritual formation for young adults.

The first duties of the new employee as listed in the job description are self-teaching, reflection, and demonstrating a lifestyle characterised by attentiveness, all of which indicates how much care and attention should be given to our projects, and how involved the accompanier should be.

Let us look at three other points which are also worthy of attention. The employee’s main focus is on

training and development, two words which appear twice in the job description. Training includes both self-teaching and promoting training among the other employees and volunteers. Development refers to a high-quality, living programme which is offered in the various projects.

The employee responsible for training and development in the area of spirituality will also start and accompany a process of forming a *Westerhelling Community*, which will have a religious basis. During the various meetings it became clear that such a community will be of essential (belonging to the essence) importance for the continuation of the projects.

Finally, the employee will make contacts with Marist projects in other countries, which reflects the international dimension that has been highlighted in recent publications of the Institute of the Marist Brothers.

During the process of creating this position Mrs Conny Stuart indicated her willingness to take on this responsibility. Conny has worked for 20 years in the Moria project (a project of the Marist Brothers and other religious congregations which provides shelter and accompaniment to young ex-prisoners). She participated in the European Mission Assembly in L’Hermitage earlier this year, and attended the meeting for lay formators that was held in Rome in May. She has been a Lay Marist since 1993. She will start her new job on 1st September.

The Board of the Brothers in the Netherlands is happy with Conny’s decision to fill this position, and wishes that she might live fervently in the spirit of Attentive Presence.

Brother Jacques Scholte

FORMATION COURSE

A course for Lay Marists from throughout the world was conducted in Rome from 18th May till 2nd June. The purpose was to see how these Lay Marists could contribute to the formation of other Lay Marists. The participant from our Province was Mrs. Conny Stuart from the Netherlands. Here, she describes her experience of the event.

It was at the invitation of Brother Brendan Geary (Provincial) that I was able to attend the formation course for Lay Marists. It was an exceptional experience. I was a bit nervous about going there; a course with 55 other Lay Marists from around the world – who am I to belong to such a group? Why me? I had read the profiles of the other participants: for the most part they were people who for years have had responsibility in their schools for the formation of Lay Marists or for conducting a variety of programmes for co-workers in the Marist schools. Fortunately it became clear on the first day that many participants arrived in Rome with the same questions, a great leveller.

In one of the workshops we were tasked with coming up with a title of a book dealing with the 55 participants as a group and the intensive exchanges and togetherness during the two weeks. I chose the title, *Fading differences*. I had established that there were certainly differences, not only in terms of language and culture, but specifically in the way Marist presence in each of the countries is found and the relationship that exists between the Brothers and the Lay Marists. But within a few days it was clear that the differences were far outweighed by the similarities. With this group, as with every other group of Marists that I have met, it was the same experience: I felt immediately “at home”.

The programme was stimulating and well thought through. The themes were those which exercise the minds of the Brothers themselves at this time, such as *Vocation, Mystics and Prophets in Communion, Mission and Joint Formation*, but also issues of administration such as the organisational structure of the Brothers and the relationship between Brothers and Lay Marists were deeply delved into.

There were several fascinating moments in the presentation and in the interventions. The last day with Brother Joe McKee left a lasting impression. He spoke of “mystics and prophets in communion”. As in the workshop on “the spiritual experience”, we talked about themes that linked easily to the projects of the Brothers at Westerhelling, Nijmegen, such as the House of Silence. Brother Joe talked of the “everyday mystic” of elements such as passion (what motivates me?), of being at one with oneself, of living out this reality, of keeping a simple perspective, of being “lighter” (with less ballast) of living life. And these attitudes help us to leave space or to create space for God. He said: a mystic takes God seriously. He gives Him time and attention. The question linked to this is: Is this important in my life? The mystic searches for God, he said, and that is possible to do. The exercises that that can bring us close to this, are difficult because of their simplicity. For example: when the alarm goes off in the morning, be grateful for the new day, before you open your eyes. It is that simple...!

When I returned home I was asked by someone, “Do you now feel yourself a Marist?” I had to think about that for a moment because my immediate reaction was to say, “That is actually not possible.” But in spite of that I answered truthfully, “Yes, I feel myself a Marist.” And I feel myself to be a part of a greater whole. Now, when I look at a map of the world I see all over it points where those whom I have just got to know, live. We share with one another that we are people who wish to live according to a shared tradition and have a common vocation and this gives me a great sense of belonging. The “back-pack” with which I have returned home from Rome, is full of inspiration, ideas, acquaintances, courage and togetherness. I am extremely grateful to have been able to participate in this course.

Conny Stuart



MEETING OF THE NETWORK OF MARIST COMMUNITIES OF EUROPE

El Escorial, 8-12 August 2015

Three years ago, at the request of the Marist European Conference (CEM) and organised by the "Brothers Today" Commission, an initial meeting took place of Brothers from newly founded communities in the European Provinces. This second meeting followed the same structure as the first allowing Brothers, and lay people who are closely involved in their projects, to share their experiences, further discuss themes of common interest and to strengthen the link between them.

The theme chosen for this meeting was: *"Celebrate the Joy of being Marists in an International Institute"*. Brother Albert André represented our Province on the organising Team. Brothers Pol Grégoire, Maurice Godenir and Roger Davids from Malmedy, Roberto Di Troia and Albert André from Arlon (René Paulus was unable to attend due to ill-health) and Robert Thunus from Habay all participated.

On the 8th August we had our welcome and the personal introductions of the 37 participants, of whom 3 were couples.

The first day, after the morning Eucharist, we had private time for reflection on our lives so far, following the advice of Pope Francis: *"To look at the past with gratitude"*, and then we shared in small groups. The afternoon was set aside for the visit to the Royal Palace and the Monastery of El Escorial. Our Province ended the day with a Taizé style prayer vigil.

On the second day we were invited to: *"Live the present with passion"*. Each community described how they were trying to respond to each of the challenges for the future laid out by the International Mission Assembly in Nairobi in September 2014: Prophecy, Mysticism and Communion. After each topic we had the opportunity to share in small groups what had caught our attention. In this way, we were able to identify the dawning of a new era already present in the life of our communities. It was naturally in prayer that we could recall all these lived realities. At the end of the day, we were asked

to watch *"The Boy on the Bike"*, a Belgian film, made by the Dardenne brothers, which portrays a young boy, abandoned by his father, but taken in by a woman. The face of a present-day young Montagne, whom lots of Marists have encountered in the course of their mission!



On the third day, we looked to the future: *"Embrace the future with hope"*. During the morning session, Brother Antonio Ramalho (Councillor General) helped us to see the convergence of the processes undertaken by the Institute in recent years, which will be the first signs of a "new beginning" which will coincide with the bicentenary of our foundation. The exchanges in the small groups once again allowed us to share our views.

Finally, before concluding the meeting, each Province shared their experience of the meeting. This was followed by the final Eucharist and a festive barbecue.

The participants suggested that in the coming months we visit each other's communities to make this exciting Network of Communities more effective in the future.



Brother Robert Thunus

IN MEMORIAM



Brother Jan Jorissen
 25th September 1925
 12th July 2015

Henri Jorissen – Harrie to the family – was born in Hoeselt on 25 September 1925, the second youngest of eight children. His father, a contractor, worked hard and long to provide for the well-being and happiness of his wife and children. Harrie's early years passed trouble-free and he demonstrated talent in many areas. He attended the Marist Brothers' Primary School and in 1937 he went to the Juniorate in Pittem. In 1939 he entered the Postulate in Mont-Saint-Guibert where he received the Marist habit on 29th December 1940. From then on he was known as Brother Jean. One year later, on 29th December 1941, he made his first vows. He left Mont-Saint-Guibert for Arlon where he continued his formation at the theological college and the *Ecole normale* for teacher training in preparation for his work and mission as a Marist. The young Brother Jean qualified as a primary teacher in June 1946 at the age of 21.

It was at this precise time, at an age full of apostolic dreams, that he found himself on an unexpected journey of suffering and pain. A hip operation confined him to bed for two years: he became a young bedridden man in the infirmary in Mont-Saint-Guibert. Although he was left with one leg which he could not bend, evil did not triumph. His long life, and his 74 years as a Marist were victorious over his handicapped body. Throughout this ordeal, Brother Jean lived his life in complete simplicity. Putting himself first or jostling for position was not his style. His preference was to live gently among and with his Brothers.

1958-85... Africa! Twenty-seven years in Rwanda, living mainly in Byimana. He was known for his love for those in need, for the sick and the marginalized: victims of war and violence. Once back in Belgium he felt a sense of responsibility towards the missionary Brothers and they were the first to be served... he took great care to look after their health.

He arrived in the community of Kessel-Lo in August 1989. His physical disability did not make it easy for him to get about and he therefore carried out many administrative tasks: accounting and records, photocopying and assembling pamphlets. He had many outside contacts thanks to the internet and his computer. He selected wonderful television programmes to suit the varied tastes of his Brothers and which they could then watch at their convenience. Every Sunday evening he carefully did the laundry and cleaned the habits diligently and patiently. A talented man, his technical and mechanical abilities made him the perfect person to repair all manner of domestic equipment.

For him, community prayer was a pleasant task. A lover of Gregorian music, he liked to play CDs for others and he also played solos on the flute. At Christmas and Easter and during the months of Mary, throughout the house, music appropriate to the occasion filled rooms, hearts and minds.

He was a nurse for many years and he understood how to handle the best doctors in the university clinics. Paradoxically, all the doctors and specialists of Louvain knew and valued him.

For the last two or three years he had acquired a "scooter". What a joy it was for him to get about independently, riding in the morning through the gardens and even as far as Diestsesteenweg to watch the world go by. Birds, squirrels, chickens, fish, pigeons, every creature and beast – he kept an eye on them all. He shared his room with a canary.

On 13th March 2015, he left the Sacred Heart clinic and was taken to the Genval community, Rue Joseph Desmet. He was cared for like a much-loved prince. But we knew that the end was clearly approaching. On Sunday, 12th July, towards noon, he gently departed, close to his good Lord and Father. He went before us, having led a life which was sober and simple, given and offered. He belonged to the Champagnat race.

Brother Edouard Blondeel

IN MEMORIAM



Brother Gerard Gillespie
3rd September 1926
25th July 2015

Harry Gillespie was the first child of Harry and Margaret Gillespie, and was born in Glasgow on 3rd September, 1926. He had a brother, James, and a sister, Margaret, with whom he stayed when he returned to Glasgow over the years. Harry's mother died when he was 9 years of age, an event that affected him deeply. He followed his desire to become a Marist Brother by going to the juniorate in Dumfries on 4th September, 1939, the day after his birthday, and the beginning of WWII. Harry loved his years at the juniorate and met people like Brother Bede and Brother Jerome who became life-long friends. He also found many outlets for his interest in practical skills such as gardening. As one Brother said to me, he was always trusted by the older Brothers because he was capable, practical and reliable.

He did his novitiate in Ireland and made first vows on the 30th August, 1945. He was given the name, "Brother Cyril Gerard," and was always known simply as "Gerard." He then studied at Saint Andrew's University and began his life as a teacher. Looking back on his life as a Brother, he was truly a pilgrim on this earth. He taught in Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Dumfries and Dundee. He was a member of the first community of Brothers in Kenya in 1984. He taught English to postulants in Madagascar for five years, and was a member of the formation community in Ghana in 1996. He also worked in administrative roles in Notre Dame de L'Hermitage in France, and in the General House.

Gerard was a man who took his religious commitment seriously. He tried to live his life as a Marist Brother with passion and dedication. He gave more than 100% to whatever he did. He was a man with an extraordinary range of talents and interests. In the course of his life he taught English, History, French, Mathematics, Music, Elocution, Biology, Music and Latin. At various times he was a teacher, Assistant Head Teacher and Head Teacher. He also worked in administration and formation roles. In Africa he helped people to build ovens to make bread, and he loved passing on his skills in bee-keeping, gardening, wine making and carpentry. He had a wonderful singing voice and loved music. Whatever he did, he did well, and he made sure he had the proper tools and equipment, which he looked after.

Everyone I have spoken to described Gerard as "strict, but fair." Part of his striving was a desire to bring out the best in people. He could be critical of students, superiors and colleagues, and people who did not work hard or who were not faithful to their responsibilities. He was a perfectionist, and while this led to significant achievements, it was also a source of suffering and self-criticism for him.

Gerard retired to Saint Benet's community in Glasgow and, around ten years ago, began to be affected by age related cognitive decline. He moved to Nazareth House in Glasgow in 2012. He was very happy in Nazareth House, and enjoyed singing songs and hymns when someone played the piano. He never lost his sense of humour. He died peacefully on Saturday, 25th July, 2015.

Brother Brendan Geary