



**Marist Brothers  
Province of West-Central Europe**

# **BULLETIN**

**September 2016**

# Editorial

Dear readers,

Now that the summer is over and the autumn is just beginning, let us look back on meetings and events of the past few months. Obviously, the biggest event in the Marist world was the commemoration of the promise of Fourvière, on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Two hundred years ago it was a small group of young men who made their way to the chapel to make their promise rather discreetly; now the great basilica was filled to the rafters with Marists from all over the world – Brothers, Fathers, Sisters, Missionary Sisters and Lay People. Among them were also some Brothers from our Province, one from each country. One of them has sent a report for this Bulletin.

In the preceding week a large group of young Marists took part in the Dare to Dream gathering, which also took place in Lyon and which had been organised by all four Marist branches. There too, participants from our Province were present; five past pupils of Marist schools, an African Brother who lives and studies in Belgium, and Aisling Demaison, the Director of Marist Education in the Province. She has written a report about this important event, and she has also agreed to write a column on aspects of her work in subsequent editions of the Bulletin. As many of you know, she is responsible for the [www.maristeu.com](http://www.maristeu.com) website and the pages on Twitter (@MaristEducation) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/maristeducationeu](https://www.facebook.com/maristeducationeu)).

To conclude I'd like to say that I am very pleased with the article on L'Hermitage Province, which may help us to see what is happening beyond the boundaries of our own Province. The European Marist Conference (CEM) wants to encourage contacts between Brothers and lay people in the European Provinces but I suspect that we have little knowledge of the other four Provinces, L'Hermitage, Compostela, Méditerranée and Ibérica. So, I have invited their Provincials to introduce their Province in the form of an article in our Bulletin. You will find one such article in each of the following editions, beginning with our "neighbour" to the south, L'Hermitage.



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Dear Brothers and Marist friends,

The Bicentenary of the Fourvière Pledge is a good time to remind ourselves that the Marist Brothers are part of a larger Marist reality in the Church and the world. We all know that Father Champagnat was inspired to join the group of idealistic young men who gathered around Jean-Claude Courveille in the seminary of Saint Irenaeus in Lyon in the years before their ordination to the priesthood.

We are also familiar with Father Champagnat's Spiritual Testament where he makes it clear that the Brothers constitute one branch of the larger Society of Mary:

*Just as your wills are to be united with those of the Fathers of the Society of Mary, in the will of one and the same Superior, I desire that your hearts and feelings mingle with theirs, in Jesus and Mary. Let their interests be yours; let it be a pleasure for you to spring to their help, as often as required. May the same spirit and the same love unite you to them as branches to the same trunk and as children of one family to a good Mother, blessed Mary.*

We know that the Vatican did not accept the idea of a Society with many branches, which Cardinal Cas-tracane, secretary of the Evangelization Congregation at the time, described as a "monster." The three branches – Marist Fathers and Coadjutor Brothers, Marist Brothers and Marist Sisters – developed separately. The origins of the Marist Missionary Sisters are rather different. On their web site we read:

*We trace our beginnings as a religious congregation to Marie Françoise Perroton and ten other valiant women who set out from France between 1845 and 1860 in response to the request from the Christians in the island of Wallis in the Pacific to "send us some devout women to teach the women". They formed small communities in Wallis and Futuna, in New Caledonia, and later in Samoa.*

*Organization into a religious congregation took place in various stages. ... The congregation finally received its approbation as an institute of pontifical right in 1931, with a mandate for universal mission.*

Father Colin also wanted to establish a Third Order of lay Marists. Other religious orders had similar groups of lay people who made promises and participated in the spiritual life of the religious order while retaining their lay status. It appears that Father Colin was not entirely happy with this model, but never found the kind of way of being lay and Marist that fitted his vision of having "the whole world Marist." As I wrote in my last letter, this was an idea that perhaps required the developments in theology that occurred as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

## **Fourvière Conference, New Jersey, USA**

I was fortunate to attend the Fourvière Conference that was held in New Jersey, USA between 17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2016. It brought together over 100 Marists: Brothers, Sisters, Fathers, Missionary Sisters and lay people. It was the first meeting of this kind that had been held in the United States. Someone observed that the different branches are more like distant cousins than brothers and sisters who are gradually getting to know each other, and this is, I believe, a fair description of our reality.

In the first part of this letter I traced the early development of the Marist branches, which helps to explain our separate lines of development. It is worth reminding ourselves, however, that Father Champagnat always saw the Brothers as part of a larger project. He was the first Provincial of the Marist Fathers in the Diocese of Lyon, and in 1839 he was elected as Assistant Superior General of the Marist Fathers. We also know that he sent a number of young women who felt that they had a vocation to religious life to Jeanne Marie Chavoin, foundress of the Marist Sisters.

Collaboration between the branches has been more evident in the years since the Second Vatican Council. There have been a number of joint projects and formation events. During the Conference I attended

**Inspired by a  
similar vision**

in New Jersey, the Fathers and Sisters referred to various foundations that had been established due to invitations from the Marist Brothers, and of receiving candidates who had been directed to the other branches by the Brothers. In our own Province the Marists in the Netherlands have a shared web site and journal, *De Schakel*. There has also been participation in education conferences over the years, and meetings at a personal level in different countries. At one point there were communities of Marist Fathers, Sisters, Brothers and Missionary Sisters in Dessau and Leipzig, in former East Germany.

Whether or not there will be more joint projects or formation events, what became evident during the meeting in New Jersey is that along with our shared history and developing friendships and relationships, that we are inspired by a similar vision of a Marian Church, with shared values and priorities. The Marist Sisters and Missionary Sisters are involved in a range of projects to help marginalized women and children in different parts of the world, including women who are victims of trafficking and sexual slavery. The Marist Fathers are working to develop the mission in their inner city parishes, reaching out to alienated and marginalized groups, and creating opportunities for spaces of spirituality and “attentive presence,” in the inner city.

It was interesting to note the number of times during the conference that Marists from other branches quoted Brother Emili’s recent letter, *Fourvière: the revolution of tenderness*. It is clear that this letter has struck a chord in the hearts of our fellow Marists.

There was also a sense that, with the election of Pope Francis and his emphasis on the place of mercy in the work of evangelization and church practice, that this is a “Kairos” moment for Marists regarding our vocation, identity and way of being in the Church. One person said that Pope Francis is our “Marist” Pope.

At the end of the meeting there was a session that asked where we might go from here. Interestingly there were not grand plans for joint projects, or a proposal that we should return to the original vision of the early Marists. There was, however, a strong desire to continue to meet together, and to promote the development of lay Marists in our branches. These meetings are an important source of encouragement and inspiration. They enable us to continue to move forward in the same direction, knowing that others share our hopes and values. They also help us to see the number of lay people, often much younger than ourselves, who continue to be inspired by our Marist vision, and our way of being Christians in the world.

## Conclusion

I had the good fortune to participate in the meeting in New Jersey, and I sense that the Youth event in Lyon entitled, “Dare to Dream,” was a positive experience for the young adults who participated. I am sure that the Bicentenary mass in Fourvière was an uplifting and encouraging experience. Father John Hannan, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, said in his homily during the Bicentenary Mass:

*In our world of today, we need to be men and women bearing new convictions, and capable of translating these convictions into action. Our founders were able to say, why not us? We are called to dream – “Dare to Dream” – this is the theme proposed to the young adults gathered this week. ... May they return home capable of transforming their dreams into reality.*

The early Marists were agents of transformation. Perhaps our joint Marist project today does require that we attempt to recreate the original structures that were envisaged by the founding members, but to share their vision and their desire to establish a Marian Church, where the values we associate with Mary are at the centre of our lives and mission.

Sincerely,

**Brendan Geary FMS**  
Provincial





## International Marist Youth Gathering

It was a privilege and life-giving experience to attend this International Marist Youth gathering (17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016) along with six young people from our Province; Marie Krottenthaler and Jasmin Nimar previous Marist students of Furth and Mindelheim and also CMI volunteers, Michael Irrgang and Stefan Haberl past pupils from Cham in Germany, Brother Jude Anani an African Brother studying in KU Leuven University and staying in the Kessel-Lo community in Belgium, Luke O'Mara a past pupil from Moyle Park College and trainee teacher from Ireland, and myself Aisling Demaison Director of Marist Education for almost one year now.

The gathering took place in the Sainte Marie school in Lyon and we resided for the week in the Lazarists accommodation nearby. It was particularly special as it was hosted by four branches of the Marist family: Marist Brothers, Marist Sisters, Marist Fathers and Marist Missionary Sisters. Throughout the week each branch celebrated together, led sessions, and set-up information tents to guide and educate participants about their mission and founder. Information flowed through song, prayer, dance and most of all love and warmth as the week progressed. Energy continued to soar as the young people expressed their joy and solidarity in so many different ways led by the magnificent and creative organizing team. There were opportunities for young people to share their faith through prayer, their culture through dance, their dreams through small community groups and their questions through dialogue with the Superior General.

The process also guided the young people to many different places; giving each branch an opportunity to learn about their founder. We took the road to Saint Chamond to visit L'Hermitage and follow Marcellin footsteps, we visited places of solidarity in Lyon and we prayed, reflected and reignited Marcellin's promise in Fourvière.







Reflection from Brother Jude: *These days for me were moments of blessings in so many ways. To see the gathering of the whole Institute as one big family in Lyon, watching all the different expressions of the Marist Charism, listening to different lived and shared experiences of the past 200 years, and most importantly the shared daily events and activities leading to the culmination of the Bicentenary celebration on 23<sup>rd</sup> July where we all renewed the Fourvière pledge once more. One major thing that struck me during the celebrations of these days was coming to the realization of how huge the Marist DREAM is and to realize that there is the Marist presence in almost every continent of the world today and our duty to make this presence relevant and meaningful to young people of our time in the light of the Gospel while still properly being able to interpret the signs of the times.*

In all, the road we travelled during this week in Lyon was a very memorable one, meeting so many Marists from around the world was enriching and revitalizing. Together we rekindled the light on our Fourvière promise, and as we travel back to our Provinces it shines brightly in our hearts. We have dared to dream; now we dare to act!

**Aisling Demaison**  
**Director of**  
**Marist Education**

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## Remembering the Fourvière Promise

The voices of around 1,500 Marists from all parts of the world filled the ancient Basilica of Fourvière on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July. It was two hundred years to the day since a small group of newly-ordained priests went to that same place to solemnly promise to do all they could to found a Society of Mary and the visible fulfilment of that promise was evident in the Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, Missionary Sisters and lay people giving thanks to God.

# 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2016



The Province of West-Central Europe sent a delegation comprising a Brother from each of the countries making up the Province: Brother John Hyland from Ireland, Brother Alois Engel from Germany, Brother Maurice Taildeman from Belgium, and Brother Gerard de Haan from the Netherlands, the Vice-Provincial. Our Provincial, Brother Brendan, had asked me to represent the Brothers of Great Britain in the Province delegation. Although the celebration was officially a European one, it was also the culmination of a week-long meeting of Marist young people from all over the world. Many of the members of the four Marist Congregations were also from outside Europe. In addition to the presence of every member of the General Council of the Marist Brothers (apart from Brother Eugène Kabanguka, still recovering from his stroke) many members of my own community of the General Administration were also there. It was a particular pleasure for me to meet up again with a number of Marist Fathers I had known and worked with during my time in London.

The Principal Celebrant at the Mass was Father John Hannan, present Superior General of the Marist Fathers. Also present in the sanctuary, beside a large number of Marist Fathers, was Bishop Patrick Le Gal, an Auxiliary Bishop in Lyons. Greetings from the other Marist Congregations were brought by their respective Superiors General: Brother Emili Turú for the Brothers, Sister Grace Ellul for the Marist Sisters and Sister Georgeanne Donovan

for the Marist Missionary Sisters. Many Sisters from Africa and the Pacific regions wore their national costumes and this added to the colour of the occasion. The language of the Mass was French, but there were also hymns in English and Spanish. Young people from different parts of the world took part in the offertory procession.



In his homily, Father Hannan reminded us that, when the young priests originally made the Promise, they were making a “commitment overflowing with hope and enthusiasm”. The newly-ordained young men made the Promise just as they were about to be sent out to their new parishes. Father Hannan challenged the congregation – Religious and lay people – to ask how they could make the commemoration of the Promise “the occasion of a new departure, a new spark of mission”.

A buffet lunch was served to around a thousand people after the Mass in the grounds of the Marist Fathers’ school, “La Solitude”. This gave everyone the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. It was indeed an occasion to remember.

**Colin Chalmers FMS**  
**General Archivist**



## *To understand what we are doing*

You may be a teacher in Germany, in Ireland, Scotland, Belgium or wherever – I think the most difficult week to fill is the week before the summer holidays. Everything is done, term papers are written, no threats whatsoever will keep the students at work. So what better time to start educating not the students, but the teachers? So the students at Marist school Recklinghausen enjoyed a day at home (considering the warm temperatures I hope home in this case means outside) and the staff assembled in the parish-centre of St. Paul’s – no, not London, we also have one in Recklinghausen (not that impressive, but really beautiful and no admission charge!).

We were quite lucky to have Brother Augustin Hendlmeier with us, who readily agreed to support us with the topic of the day – Marcellin Champagnat and his ideas of education.

Now, wait a minute, a staff at a Marist school doing further education on the basics of Marist education?? Well, it has been a long time since the staff of our school had a closer contact with Brothers who were interested in keeping the Marist spirit alive in this school. Older teachers who knew, cherished and lived this spirit, have left or died, some teachers had forgotten about it, some were maybe frustrated because nothing happened, and the younger ones simply did not know about it. And you do not learn to be a Marist teacher just by reading a comic about the founder’s life and work. So Brother Augustin helped us to get going and together with the head teachers Thomas Birkenhauer and Stefan Schulze Beiering, the parish priest David Formella (himself a former Marist student) and the school chaplain Ulrike Weber prepared the day for the staff. And though his presentation on Marcellin’s life and work in the morning was quite new to many of the staff, most of those present suddenly saw that the principles are in fact realised at the school every day: family spirit, love of the students, recognition of hard work and a personal interest in everyone involved in school life. Brother Augustin expressed it like this: “My intention for today is as follows: When tomorrow morning you pass the sign saying ‘Marist school’ I want you to understand that this is more than just a name. It is an atti-





tude. It is a way of teaching. Tomorrow you will read these words in a different way.” In the afternoon the teachers talked about the question how these principles have already been realised at the school and where we still have to work in this field. Many good ideas were developed, questions were asked and the teachers started to understand that their work is also valuable because there is more to working in a Marist school than just to teach.



All in all, it was a very successful day, ending in the late afternoon with a mass directed by David Formella. A good foundation was laid for the further work at the school and we are confident that our efforts will be fruitful and the spirit of Marcellin is still alive at the school.

Ulrike Weber

## Celebration of the Jubilee of Marist Religious Life



It was in the rural setting of the house at Habay-la-Vieille that the Belgian Brothers celebrated on 15<sup>th</sup> August the jubilees of some Brothers. Habay, originally a Dominican monastery and later a Brothers' juniorate, noviciate and scholasticate, is today a retreat house that is much valued in the Province of Luxembourg and much further afield.

It was beneath a radiant sun that a good fifty Brothers, friends of the Brothers and members of the families of the Jubilarians made their way to “Le Bua”. Eight Brothers were celebrating a jubilee of their religious life: 75 years of religious life for Brothers Roger Alvoet (unfortunately unable to attend due to health issues), Lucien Blomme, Jules Bradfer and Jean-Marie Genin; 60 years for Brothers Hubert Genbrugge, Edgard Iserentant, René Leuridan and Theo Van Driessche.

In his introductory comments at the beginning of Mass, Brother Gerard de Haan (Vice-Provincial) welcomed the Jubilarians as well as the many people present, and offered them congratulations and thanks on behalf of Brother Brendan (Provincial) for the witness of their faithfulness to the Marist religious life.

“The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary,” he said, “is of course a solemn feast of the Church, but it also takes on a special character for us Marists, as it reminds us of the day of the foundation of the Institute on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1817, when Father Champagnat ‘gave us the name of Mary’, as Brother Emili Turú mentioned in his circular.

Let us remind ourselves that after the promise of the 12 young priests in the chapel at Fourvière,

Champagnat was the first to throw himself into the Marist adventure by founding, on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1817, the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Mary.

Today we have in our midst eight Brothers who for 75 or 60 years have answered 'Yes' to God's call, following the Marist religious life."

Father Wilfried De Coster noted in his homily: "60 or 75 years spent in the love and service of God... 60 or 75 years of attentive and patient dedication in the service the young... 60 or 75 years of small daily tasks carried out in a simple manner as a Little Brother of Mary following in the footsteps of Saint Marcellin Champagnat. Thank you, dear Brothers, for your witness of faithfulness and commitment to the Institute. Like Mary, at a point in your life you said 'Here I am, Lord: let it be done to me according to your will'."

In his homily, Father De Coster came back briefly to the theme of faithfulness. "Faithfulness", he said, "is a flower in today's world that is often plagued by instability. How precious it is! Those who know how to cultivate it know how much it embellishes life. It brings **the security** that love needs in order to blossom, **the trust** that we need to live in peace...", and in conclusion, "And so, with the help of the Virgin Mary, 'Our Ordinary Resource' and with the help of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, in prayer let us trust so that having been found faithful to the love of Christ, when the hour of that supreme meeting with Him comes, we may hear: 'Enter, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master'."



*The jubilarians (from left to right): Félix Genin, Jules Bradfer, Elie Blomme, Edgard Iserentant, Theo Van Driessche, Hubert Genbrugge and René Leuridan*

After the homily the Brothers were invited to renew their religious profession. Brother Gerard firstly gave a lighted candle to each of the Jubilarians as a symbol of the warmth and light that had radiated from them throughout their lives. He then invited the Jubilarians and the other Brothers present to renew their religious profession, in French or in Dutch. The lay people who were present were invited to renew together their baptismal promise. At the end of the celebration, all present sang Théo Mertens' song: "Brothers of one family, gathered round Father Champagnat..."

The celebration of jubilees is a very Marist tradition which dates back to 1881, as noted by Brother Augustin Hendlmeier in an article published in the Bulletin of June 2016: "A Marist tradition that we want to willingly maintain in the years to come."

It was in faithfulness to this tradition that we willingly participated in this celebration, and in a spirit of conviviality that we shared the festive meal that had been prepared for us.



**Albert Thomé FMS**

# The European Provinces

## Part 1: L'Hermitage



Over the past several years cooperation between the five European Marist Provinces has increased, and efforts have been made to promote relations between Brothers and lay people in their countries. Therefore, let us become (more) acquainted with the other four Provinces; in the following Bulletins they will present themselves, beginning with L'Hermitage. Many thanks for this article to Brother Maurice Berquet, the Provincial, who was succeeded by Brother Pere Ferré during the recently held Provincial Chapter.

The Province of L'Hermitage was formed in 2003 with the amalgamation of the Province of Catalunya and the two French Provinces. It covers six countries: Algeria, Catalunya, France, Greece, Hungary and Switzerland. In May 2016, there were 287 Brothers, one novice and 46 communities.

Four of the countries are involved in the field of education and social projects: 25 educational establishments involving a total of around 25,000 pupils, and 18 social projects reaching out to a little over 2000 clients. In each of these countries there is an organisational body which manages the network, in close collaboration with the Mission Secretariat of the Province: the Fundacio Champagnat in Catalunya, the Association Marcellin Champagnat in France, MISZ in Hungary and ΣΜΑΕΛ in Greece. The pastoral care of young people is the primary concern of all our work, with an annual common theme. In Catalunya, two movements involving young people – “Marist Scouts” and “Open to All, Open Hearts” – offer apostolic activities. For four years now, the sporting competition “Jocs Athletics” which takes place every year in Catalunya, has been open to young people involved in Marist projects in France and Greece.

The Brothers-Lay People project lives on in about 40 groups: Fraternities of the Champagnat Movement (in France and Greece), Marist Life groups in Catalunya and local Marist teams (in France). These lay groups number 370 people and 45 Brothers.

There is a strong engagement by the Province in international cooperation with the NGO SED (a non-government organisation in Lleida, Catalunya), and the support of FMSI (one Brother from the Province works there, and the profits from “Le Calendrier Champagnat” are given to this project). Currently, four Brothers from the Province are part of the Asia District. Finally, one of our Brothers has been asked by the Superior General to take part in the “Fratelli” project, a joint venture between the Brothers of Christian Schools and the Marist Brothers, helping Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. Other Brothers are in America, Africa and New Caledonia.

Over the last six years, the setting up of four Secretariats has contributed greatly to the life and governance of the Province: Secretariat for Brothers Today, Secretariat for Brothers/Lay People, Secretariat for Mission, and Secretariat for the Evangelical Use of Resources. These Secretariats, composed of Brothers and lay people, ensure the liveliness of their respective areas, always in close collaboration with the Provincial Council.



In the preparatory meetings for the last Provincial Chapter, there was a noticeable increase in the feeling of belonging to the same Province among the Brothers and lay Marists. This was the result of people meeting together (e.g. the annual meeting of those involved in education, the Provincial meetings to draw up common outlines for mission), training sessions (e.g. those for Community Superiors and those for joint Brothers/Lay People activities), retreats for Brothers, or for Brothers and lay Marists on the common annual theme of the Project for Community Life.

After the killing of Brother Henri Vergès in 1994 in Algiers, the return of the Brothers to Algeria by the former Provinces in 2002, a year before the setting up of the Province of L'Hermitage, was a very firm commitment. Today, there are two communities, one in Oran and the other in Mostaganem, with responsibility for the diocesan libraries. Our communities provide a service to the students by offering a space to work, the tools needed for study, and a place for get-togethers and celebrations, particularly for the foreign, sub-Saharan students.

Our presence in Hungary was pushed forward by Brother Charles Howard, former Superior General. There is one community in the country, in Karcag, to the east of Budapest. With a team of teachers, the community runs a primary school where 95% of the pupils are gypsies. In Esztergom, the ONU centre is situated in the Romany area of the city and is run by lay Marists.

Several communities in the Province have an international flavour: Lyon, Notre-Dame de l'Hermitage, Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, Lagny, Paris, Acharnes (Greece), Saint-Genis-Laval, La Valla en Gier, Beauchamps-Residence, Mostaganem, Oran...

Because of its geographical position, the Province of L'Hermitage is very involved in the administration of the original Marist locations: N-D de l'Hermitage, La Valla en Gier, Maisonnets and Marlihes. Two houses are reception and spiritual centres – N-Dame de l'Hermitage, and Les Avellanes (Catalunya).

There are three communities which are mixed communities, i.e. made up of Brothers and lay people: N-D de l'Hermitage, Mulhouse-La Valla, which is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Llinars del Valles, and a fourth is in the process of being set up.

To conclude this presentation, here are the forward plans agreed on at the last Provincial Chapter which ended on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2016:

- 1- Intensify the communion between Brothers and Lay People in the areas of spirituality, community and mission, in the organisation and governance of the Province.
- 2- Make the training and support of Brothers and lay people a priority.
- 3- Reinforce the evangelisation of children and young people in a new and creative manner.
- 4- Firm up the Marist presence in border refugee camps.
- 5- Continue to deepen the Marist spirituality, taking even more inspiration from our roots.
- 6- Update and put into practice the communication plan of the Province.



**Maurice Berquet FMS**

# From the History of the Institute

## Part 2: Schools and Pupils

As in Part 1 (cf. Bulletin 2/2016) so here, these further aspects of the History of the Institute which are presented are derived from the annals of Brother Avit. In this section we look particularly at two developments and events after the death of Champagnat when Brother François was Director, and later Superior General.

### The problem of spreading too quickly

In the decade of 1840 to 1850 there was undreamt of and hugely successful expansion in the number of our schools. The demand for new foundations overstepped itself and the opening of new schools took on the magnitude of an avalanche. This caused some embarrassment for the running of the establishments since those who demanded the schools were generally Bishops, Vicars General or other clergy. The availability of sufficiently qualified Brothers created a significant problem and as the pressure of the demands increased, the result was often unwise and rash decision making. The problem was recognised and attempts made to avoid it. Hence, Brother François in 1844 wrote in a letter to the Bishop of Bonald, *"In the last 27 months we have opened 25 schools and put in place an extra 100 Brothers. With regard to our resources we are fully engaged. Beyond that we have 60 Brothers in the house but they are too young to be placed in schools or insufficiently prepared."* And already in 1843 he had written to Vicar General Cholleton, *"In the last year we have overstretched ourselves with new foundations which have been forced on us. A too speedy growth could damage us and so we have to set up properly any new establishment."*

Avit had clearly recognised this problem and wrote in 1845, *"The Superiors must resist pressure so as not to put at risk the interests of the Institute by taking on too many foundations without sufficient qualified Brothers."* But the developments continued more or less undeterred and in 1846 the number of schools had jumped to 125 with around 20,000 pupils. In spite of 130 entries into the various novitiates, there was concern about vocations of which they could not have enough due to the generally expanding demands. Brother François wrote in a circular of 1846, *"I encourage you once again to double your efforts to obtain good candidates using all the means that your piety and intelligence can muster."*

To avoid an uncontrolled and damaging development the brakes were applied which in 1847 effectively put a halt on further foundations apart from one in Camaret, although the number of requests in that year was 61. So one can imagine the pressure on the Superiors, coming on the one side from the demand for Brothers in the schools, and on the other from the fact that the only Brothers available were too young and not yet fully trained. The danger of fast tracking the training of the Brothers was great but alluring. The problems could not be ignored. So it could happen that one could go for quantity over quality as Avit explained when he commented on the school at Bourg-Argental in 1852, *"The inspector has reported that the school is making little progress. Class one has 88 pupils and the second class 120. So progress inevitably must be weak and a third class out of the question."*

What was to be done in the face of an ever growing demand which Avit in 1848 estimated at 200? As time went on, his opposition to too swift a growth became more decisive. In 1852 when Napoleon became President and introduced a policy which favoured education through the Church and so increased the demand for such, he wrote, *"This situation could be fatal for us. Our Superiors are allowing themselves to flow with the stream and taking on too many new establishments. To set these up we require to put novices in before they have made a proper novitiate and have them under Directors not up to the mark. The inspectorate showed itself inclined to agree and the official letters of appointment brought about neither the personal qualities nor the competence for leadership,"* and added rather caustically as he was sometimes inclined to do, *"they allowed themselves to be deceived and founded another 22 schools in the same year."*

#### Protestant pupils

The presence of Protestant pupils in the Brothers' schools could have been a surprising event, but their acceptance into the schools was not a problem and to this day could well be still exemplary. Already in 1843 Avit had indicated that in Anduze the major-

ity (!) of the pupils were Protestant and that they learned the Catechism, said the Rosary and attended Mass. In Cheylard, La Voulte and in other places there were Protestants who took part in all the Catholic exercises such as R.E. lessons and liturgical feasts, and what's more, *"without any problem."* On the intervention of the Parish Priest at La Voulte the Bishop asked that the Protestants be exempt from these Catholic exercises. However, it was clear that no pressure should be put on the evangelical pupils and that this freedom would continue into the future. This was an issue in La Voulte only. Everywhere else, especially in Anduze, *"the Protestants would be the same as the others, and indeed for many it would be even better."*

It is worth noting that these facts are not well known among us and provide a precedent for ecumenical endeavour in our schools today. How ahead of their time the Marist Brothers were in those days!

**Augustin Hendlmeier**  
FMS



## The protection and rights of children

**Conference in Rome, 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2016**

A feeling of curiosity mingled with expectation were present when I arrived in Rome at the Mother House of the Marist Brothers, a house that I had had the opportunity to visit a year earlier with an experienced guide, Brother Colin. So I was not arriving in a strange place, and I had hardly crossed the threshold when I received a warm welcome from the receptionist, from the Brothers who were present in the hallway, and of course from our Provincial, Brother Brendan Geary.

Different languages, seeming to represent the five continents, could be heard. But at this meeting of the builders of the Tower of Babel there were no language problems, because there were numerous common factors; a desire to communicate with each other, the pleasure of seeing again familiar faces, and above all, the Marist spirit that was more than tangible in this place.





So, one could ask, what was the reason why I, a woman and a lay person, was there. Well, I was a delegate from the Province of West-Central Europe at a conference on the protection of children and young people, since I had accepted the invitation to take over this role, in Germany, from Brother Alois Engel, who in recent years had so brilliantly and effectively carried out this delicate task, dealing mainly with cases of sexual abuse. And so I had the opportunity to participate in an international conference with a large number of Marist Brothers and a smaller number of lay people. There were about 70 participants.

This meeting was well thought out, planned and delivered by the organising team, Brothers Manel Mendoza, Michael de Waas, Lluís Serra and Brendan Geary. We are sincerely grateful to them!

The principal themes of the workshops that followed and the exchanges that took place were:

- The protection of children and young people
- The rights of children
- The sexual abuse that had been committed by Brothers and lay people working for the Institute

This final theme, being extremely sensitive, had for a long time been taboo, denied, and is now reported in the press, and over recent years has been treated frankly, sincerely and transparently by the Brothers.

During the difficult working sessions, the term “abuse” was discussed at length, covering all its forms, as well as the long history of what had taken place. Year on year the Church in general, and the Brothers in particular, have done an enormous amount of work, carrying out investigations and gathering information, and have worked hard to put in place a support system for victims and above all, a system that deals with organisation and prevention.

We had an overview of the work carried out and the structures that have been put in place in the United States, Australia, Ireland, Europe (both Western and Eastern), Africa and Asia. Things changed in differing degrees, depending on the country and their cultures.

We were very aware of how important it is that the victims of sexual or other abuses are listened to, and are believed, when we listened to the testimony of a German lady who was abused by a priest when she was nine years old. *(Her account of the conference will appear in a future edition.)*

It would be tedious to want to describe chronologically and in detail all the interventions that took place, which were to varying degrees interesting, and mainly dealt with children and young people. So, I will limit myself by choosing particular cases which I found both interesting and moving, for example the contributions that dealt with violence.

Brother Francis Lukong spoke of his experience in Cameroon in a day school and in a boarding school, where the pupils had a bullying culture, with a form of physical and mental torture carried out by the stronger pupils on the weaker ones. It was a tradition, a type of “ragging”. The younger pupils had to do whatever was asked of them by the older pupils, they had to accept it. The older ones carried out extortions and corporal punishments etc. Brother Francis established very strict rules to eradicate this scourge. To us Europeans, these rules seem very harsh, but the results – a



school, a boarding school where all pupils have the same status, where they all feel safe – speak for themselves. We also have similar problems in our schools, without really having adequate solutions.

Other contributors also spoke about violence and corporal punishment, carried out by family members, by teachers in school, by the justice system as in Columbia (referred to by Brother Diego Zawadzky). An enormous amount of work on prevention (rather than punishment) is done and continues to be done. Laura Mino Perez, a young lay Marist, recalled her internal conflicts and powerlessness when faced with corporal chastisements at home and in school when she was in Ghana.

Once again, we were disgusted by what goes on in Africa and in South America, but in Europe, in well off countries, there are a great number of children who are ill-treated and abused. We must be vigilant and not turn away when we see such abuse. But that demands courage.

Courage which is not lacking in Brother Ted Fernandez, nor faith, nor sacrifice, nor charisma, in his work in the Philippines at the Marcellin Foundation, a centre that has existed since 1991 and looks after children at risk, who are in conflict with their parents, with the law, or who are homeless. Each day, students help to bring children who are living on the streets to the centre, so that they can spend at least one night in a house. Some stay on and they try to educate them, but for others the call of the street is stronger.

What came out of these examples and other contributions was the great need for protection, prevention, recognition and the putting into practice the rights of children. After having read the first 10 rights, everyone thought they were the norm – the right to equality, the right to food, the right to culture, the right to health, the right to a non-violent education, the right to play, the right to speech... These are fundamental rights, recognised in many countries but denied or not applied in others. And it is here that each one of us is called upon to act, to work towards sensitisation, to increase awareness, to be a mouthpiece for these rights.



There is so much more to tell, and this article will not make tangible the atmosphere of goodwill towards children and young people, of fraternity, of friendship, of sharing, of faith, of charisma, of spirituality, of the Marial and Marist spirit, particularly during the Masses, but I think and hope that those who read it will know what it is about, as they have certainly already lived through similar moments, and we hope to live through still more under the ever present protection of Marcellin.

**Nancy Camilléri**

# John Hyland FMS

15<sup>th</sup> July 1948 – 10<sup>th</sup> September 2016



John was born on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1948 at Kyleboher, Kilcormack, Birr, County Offaly, as the eldest of five. He was brought up on a farm in Offaly. His father was one of the founders of the first branch of the Labour party in the area, while his mother maintained the traditional interest in the children's education, and their involvement in parish and Catholic life.

John attended Our Lady's Hermitage in Athlone during his High School years. He then spent two years in the novitiate in Bairo, Italy where he learned French and Italian, and began serious religious study, which he maintained for the rest of his life. After years of study in Dublin and Maynooth he spent some time teaching, and was then asked to study catechetics at Mater Dei Institute in Dublin. He was also Assistant Master of Novices with Brother Colman Parker in Farranboley House. John enjoyed having the opportunity to read theology and spirituality, and enjoyed the stimulation of formation work.

John moved to Athlone in 1978, and began what he described as the happiest period of his life. He was an outstanding Director of Champagnat House in Athlone, and was involved in teaching, church activities and pastoral work in the school and town. John became Provincial in 1989. The first few years were straightforward, but all of that changed with the consequences of the first case of sexual abuse against a Brother, in December 1992. This was the first case of sexual abuse by a priest or Brother that was dealt with in the Irish courts. There were no policy documents to help John at this time, and the hard-learned lessons of the past 25 years were not available to offer guidance and direction. I would like to quote from a reflection that Father John Hannan, Superior General of the Marist Fathers, sent to me a few days ago: "As a Christian and consecrated religious John's true worth came through in his handling of some very difficult safeguarding issues. His approach to child-care was unique for the time. It was child-centred where the protection of the young was primary. His integrity was remarkable. He was indeed a ground-breaker when it came to implementing best practice principles. Coupled with this strong and integrated approach was the care of the victims and their families, and the ongoing support of the convicted."

When he finished his term as Provincial in 1996 he took a sabbatical. John taught in Moyle Park College from 1997-1999, and then was appointed Principal of Marist College in Athlone from 1999-2002. He returned to Dublin when he was appointed Director of Marian Community in 2008. He enjoyed the presence of Brothers who came to Ireland from many countries to learn English, and created a wonderful Marist space of welcome and hospitality. The words which most often come to people's minds regarding John are compassion, kindness, gentle, present, concern, listening, empathic. He was an educated, cultured man who loved Irish history and politics, and could engage in serious conversation about many topics. He also had a wonderful sense of humour, and he loved sport. He was a deeply religious man, who took faith and religious reflection seriously, and he had a great sense of compassion for the poor and marginalised.

He wore many hats and took his responsibilities seriously. He was a leader in the Marist world, and exemplified a style of leadership that was consistent with our Marist values.

I have received messages of sympathy, often with reflections about the way John touched people's lives, from Marist Brothers all over the world. John was deeply loved. May he rest in peace.

**Brendan Geary FMS**  
(extracts from the eulogy)