



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

# **BULLETIN**

**March 2017**

# Introduction

Dear readers,

Readers of the Bulletin who also visit the [www.champagnat.org](http://www.champagnat.org) website, will be aware that celebrations of the Bicentenary of the Marist Institute are taking place all over the Marist world. There have been celebrations, meetings of Brothers and lay people, formation events for animators, conferences etc. which highlight the achievements of the past 200 years and which, perhaps more importantly, help us to look forward to the next stage of the Marist story.

This edition of the Bulletin picks up the theme of the Bicentenary in various ways. Judith van Acker has written about the celebration which took place in Nijmegen on 7<sup>th</sup> January, and Aisling Demaison highlights a range of ways that the Bicentenary will be celebrated in the Province in the months ahead. Brother Brendan, in his introductory letter, refers to the various celebrations that took place around 2<sup>nd</sup> January, and then shares about his recent visit to the “Lavalla200>” community in Syracuse, which referred in the Introduction to the previous Bulletin.

The community in Syracuse is working with young immigrants, mostly from Africa, who are vulnerable in a range of ways. The Province of Ibérica, in the article which introduces Marist life in that Province, explains at some length the importance of this aspect of Marist work: the protection of children, promoting the rights of children, and formation to raise awareness of the situation of vulnerable children in their schools and projects and across the world. This theme is picked up explicitly in Agnes Wich’s article regarding her presentation at the Conference on the Rights of Children that was held in Rome last April, with delegates from every Marist Province and District. Brother Brendan was one of the organizers of this important conference, which illustrates the commitment of the Institute, and the General Council, to the safeguarding of children and promotion of their rights in Marist schools and projects.

Brother Augustin continues his series of historical articles with a fascinating article on the Brothers who remained in Paris during the time of the Paris Commune (1870). Brother Brendan has written a two-part article tracing the history of Marist House in Glasgow, which will close as a community later this year. The first part of this article has been published in this edition of the Bulletin. On the theme of endings, there is also an account of the celebration of the first ten years of the Global Citizenship project in Dundee, Scotland, which was also an opportunity to thank Brother Douglas Welsh for his work in the Diocese of Dunkeld over the past 32 years.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Bulletin, which continues to reflect the creativity, variety and passion for mission which is part of the life of our Province.

**Daphne van Dongen**



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## Brother Provincial's letter

Syracuse, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2017

Dear Brothers and Marist friends,

I want to begin this letter by thanking everyone who has been involved in planning and organizing the various Bicentenary events in our Province. Brothers and lay Marists celebrated the anniversary of our foundation on 2<sup>nd</sup> January in every country of the Province. In her article for the Bulletin Aisling Demaison has also highlighted a number of other events that are taking place. It is appropriate that this letter – and many of the Bicentenary events – are taking place during the season of spring, when we focus on light and new life in our lives.

As I read about the various events that have taken place and that are being planned, I am struck by the way that our Marist values and identity are being promoted with commitment, clarity and confidence. I am also struck by the way that our lay friends and colleagues have taken the

initiative to celebrate our Marist tradition in order to promote and share the charism of St. Marcellin. I am impressed by the energy, enthusiasm and joy which is part of these celebrations in the different countries.

When Brother Emili spoke about the plans for the Bicentenary during the General Conference that was held in the Hermitage in September, 2013, he said that he did not want there to be any spirit of triumphalism in the manner of our celebration. He highlighted the importance of gratitude for what had happened in the past, and said that we should express regret and sorrow for our failings and limitations. He also said that young people should be involved in the celebrations as much as possible. As we know, in the wonderful video message that he delivered for the Bicentenary, he also spoke about engagement, and a spirit of renewing our commitment to the ongoing work of St. Marcellin in our world today.

I am writing this letter in Syracuse in Sicily, where I have been visiting the La Valla 200+ community that was established here to work with young men who have arrived on the island as refugees / immigrants. Along with my friend Moira Macfarlane, who worked as British Consul in Italy for ten years and speaks Italian, I visited the Casa Freedom project where Brother Onorino (Italy), Gabriel (Brazil) and Mario (Chile) provide language lessons, and work with these young men – mostly from Africa – who are being helped to sort out the papers necessary to move on to another place. Hopefully, in time, they will be able to find work and a better life in Europe. It is clear to me that this project is a way to continue the work of St. Marcellin in our world today. Pope Francis has spoken often about the urgent need to respond to the extraordinary numbers of refugees and immigrants who are reaching the shores of Europe in search of safety and a better life.



It is moving to talk to the young men who live at Casa Freedom; to assist them in their efforts to learn a new language and adjust to life in Europe, enjoy their energy when they play football together, notice the sadness in their eyes when they share what they can about their lives in Africa and what they saw and experienced on their journeys to Europe, and hear their hopes of finding a job and moving on to the next stage on their journey. It is also impressive to be present with the members of the Marist community in Syracuse. The young immigrants have confidence in them and you can see how the genuine concern and practical support of the members of the community are making a difference to the lives of these young men.

My experience in Syracuse is only one example of the many ways that Marists are making a difference to the lives of young people. Here in our own Province the members of staff in Marist schools provide a wonderful education for the students, and the various Marist projects in the different countries touch the lives of children and adults in ways that bring joy, life, healing, hope, encouragement and inspiration.

In my first letter of 2017 I want to highlight the many good things that are happening in our Province and the Institute. We have much for which to be grateful, many things to celebrate and firm grounds for hope. In the course of this year we will continue to work on the new Constitutions. The General Council will report to the General Chapter on the work of the past eight years, and new leadership for the Institute will be elected in late September, which will be given the task of guiding Marist life and mission at the beginning of our third Marist century. This is an important and exciting time for Marists across the world.

I will end by inviting you to entrust the work and discernment of the year ahead to the care of Mary, our Good Mother, and St. Marcellin, who began this work 200 years ago.

With my best wishes for the season of Lent and the joy we will celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Sincerely,

Brother Brendan Geary,

Provincial

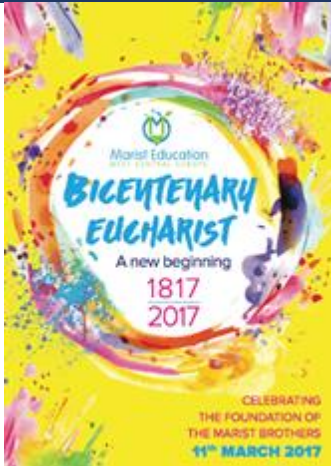


## Belgium

### 2 January 2017



## Marist Education Bicentenary Celebrations 2017



The main focus in the last few months has been preparing for the Bicentenary celebrations across the Province. There is a wonderful flow of energy and excitement as planning is underway. Some countries have gathered together as Marist communities to celebrate, some have decided to utilize the opportunity to refresh and renew their Marist connections.

The 2017 celebration events started on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and since then across the Province there have been many more. I would like to give you a snapshot of some of them. In February, there was a beautiful mass and celebration of

the India project in Dundee, already 10 years old. Brother Douglas Welsh was honoured with the medal of the diocese and highly praised for his work on the project and across the community. Head teacher from St John's High School, Fiona McLagan, organized the event superbly and spoke beautifully about how they value Brother Douglas. Students from St John's and St Paul's sang beautifully throughout the ceremony.



Some other events include an Irish Marist celebration on March 11<sup>th</sup> with the three Marist schools, the Brothers and many Marist friends going back through the years since the Brothers arrived in Ireland in 1862. Brother David Hall from Marist Australia is making the trip to speak at the event and will also visit each school to speak to staff. Along with Brother Tony Leon, Director of the Brothers Today Secretariat in Rome, they will also take the opportunity to speak to the Irish Marist Student Leaders.

Following this on March 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, we travel to Germany to attend two Marist Symposiums celebrating the Bicentenary in Furth and in Mindelheim. Brother John Klein is travelling from USA to speak at both events, along with Aisling Demaison and Provincial Brendan Geary. There is also the much-anticipated Marist musical prepared by students and staff in Maristen Gymnasium Furth to look forward to.

Then we travel to Scotland, where St Joseph's College in Dumfries which is undergoing major renovations have unearthed a menu from the Marist Centenary celebrations and have decided to create a replica event with the same menu and documents for the Bicentenary. Students and staff are working tirelessly in the preparation for the event on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Those are some of the upcoming events for the Bicentenary but we also have lots of other things happening in the Marist Education world of West-Central Europe.



- We have joined forces with Marists Internationally with the new initiative called *Marist Service Day* on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Marists around the world are asked on this day to serve their community in some way or to fundraise for a chosen Marist project. Many schools across the Province are getting involved and we hope to develop each year.
- Marist College Athlone have decided to organize a sponsored cycle with funds going to the Blue Marists in Syria. In the run up to the event a Syrian man from a Marist school will speak to the students about the troubles in Aleppo and classes will read Brother Georges' letters. Then, on March 29<sup>th</sup> students will cycle 40km across Ireland for this wonderful cause.
- Maristen Realschule Cham are also working on ideas for students to serve in their community, so we are looking forward to hearing the results!



Thanks to social media Marists from the USA and across the world have extended their support and are following our programme closely.

As well as events being organized, there are also many trips happening in the month of March. Our annual pilgrimage to the Hermitage is being attended by teachers and staff from Marist projects in Ireland, Scotland, The Netherlands and Germany. The pilgrimage booklets have been revised and updated from last year and we are excited to get some feedback about them.

Students from Ireland will also be making the trip to the Hermitage on March and April. In March, we have a group of 10 students from Moyle Park College visiting to learn about the origins of Marist values and to follow the footsteps of Marcellin. In April, we have a group of 30 Marist Student Leaders whilst being immersed in the surroundings of Marcellin and deepening their knowledge about his life. The Marist Student Leadership programme is growing from strength to strength and preparations are being made for its launch in Scotland for the next academic year. You can see the Province has been busy this year, I'd also like to tell you about speakers we've had. We are so fortunate to have Brothers and lay people from around the world willing to give up their time to impart their expertise to our students and staff. This year we had a visit from Three2Six programme in South Africa. Students in Ireland, Scotland and Germany all benefited from hearing from the programme coordinator Rebecca Bromhead. Some students in Scotland enjoyed it so much they are now interested in volunteering in the project. Preparations are underway to make this happen!

That is a taste of some of the things happening across the Province for the Bicentenary and you can be assured there are many more. The team at Marist Education are delighted that Marist connections are growing, opportunities are blossoming and more and more Marists of all ages are becoming involved. It is a new beginning for the Marist West-Central Europe.



**Aisling Demaison**  
Director of „Marist Education“

# A JOYOUS FIRE



***As Arjan Broers exclaimed on 7<sup>th</sup> January, the story of the table ends with these words. The table around which the first Brothers gathered 200 years ago was the centre point of the jubilee celebrations of the Brothers from the Netherlands. Around 70 people gathered in the Church in Nijmegen to hand on the tradition of the Marist Brothers. What story were we telling with our presence?***

On January 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 I got up, looked out of the window and saw that it was snowing. I exchanged a few bits of news with a couple of friends from Arnhem whom I had invited to join me in the celebrations of the festival with the theme of "Vreugdevuur" (A celebration of Joy) of the Marist Brothers. Should we travel as planned by car, or with the slipperiness of the road, by train? The advice from the radio was to dissuade one from travelling by car, particularly in the West of the country. It called to my mind the snowstorm in which Marcellin lost his way 200 years ago.





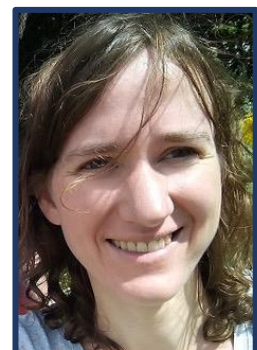
But it was not as bad as that. We decided to travel by car and reached the Church no bother at all. However, some participants did not manage because of the weather so there was a little less body warmth in the Church. It was fortunate however that Diete Sybesma was there and sang the Mantras with us to stir up our inner spirits. Jonathan Bartling spoke of the creativity of the women, from Mary, that is in each of us and which each one of us is. Arjan Broers relates the history of the table from La Valla.

In the afternoon several workshops were offered; I chose the one on the theme of the “power of imagination”. The leader of the group, Corina Frans, asked us to draw what it was that impressed us most in the morning. At least half of the group drew a table or a tree – a tree that is thought would die but we discover that only its form changes and it becomes a table. This message impressed several of us.

Then we handed on our drawing and the person next to us added to it. It can be an association or a contradiction in picture or in word. We did this a couple of times. When everyone had their own sheet back, we shared with one another what struck us about the end product and what touched us. I was astonished that someone had drawn a cat on mine since I had done the same on someone else’s drawing as a symbol of the present. Another female participant had written the greeting, “Namaste” on the sheet of someone and likewise received a Namaste greeting. This piece of magic gives me trust in life.

After the workshop the whole group sang a final hymn in the Church. Participants were asked to light a candle which we were to take home with us to remind us that we were there and were seen; to remind us that together we had written a story that can bring light – a light that will also be seen in the distant future.

**Judith van Acker**





## The demands and reality of Education in the German Marist Schools

Brothers and staff as well as the various Association members from the schools in Furth, Cham, Recklinghausen and Mindelheim met from 17 -19 November at the Retreat House, Fürstenried in Munich. In an introductory lecture, Hans Staudner spoke of the demands and reality of education in the German Marist schools. Arising out of this was the key question of the meeting: How can the Marist Spirit and the networking of the schools be strengthened?

Inspired by the question, the participants exchanged ideas on the concrete understanding of the Marist profile, offered suggestions and soon came up with new common projects. Among these was the setting up of a common Gospel based document in Art and Religious Instruction as well as the creation of an identifiable dress code. Also discussed was the implementation of suggestions from the Province of West-Central Europe such as the Marist Curriculum and Marist Leadership. In view of the Bicentenary celebrations the opportunity was taken by those present to discuss the scope of the celebrations in the various schools.

The programme of the few days was enriched with a talk by Brother Augustin Hendlmeier on "Mary in the Spirituality of Marcellin" and a reflection on "Marial Devotion" by Hans Staudner. This exercise in continuing education had its particular value in the opportunity for meeting one another personally, as Brothers, representatives of the various organisations attached to the schools, Marist International Solidarity, CMI Germany, the Munich Fraternity, friends of Marist school Cham (FMC) and the staffs of the four Marist schools. These informal exchanges and the general gatherings were brought together in the chapel during morning and evening prayer which gave strength and inspiration for a lively implementation of our common endeavour.

Felix Heilbrunner  
Michael Schmalzl FMS

# The provinces in Europe



## Province of Ibérica

*We like to think our Province is looking to the future*

***The Marists arrived in Spain in 1886. Today, Marist Spain is organised in four Provinces: Compostela, Mediterránea, L'Hermitage and Ibérica. In our country there are 55 schools, a University centre, and 38 social projects: 673 Brothers, 1.957 teachers and 54.417 pupils.***

The Province of Ibérica stretches through the centre and northern peninsula of Spain, and shares the Spanish territory with three other Provinces: Compostela, Mediterránea and L'Hermitage. Moreover, we include social projects and communities situated in Bucharest (Romania). In fact, the Province has 157 Brothers who live in 25 communities. They carry out their mission and apostolate in 18 projects. Participating in the life, mission, work and responsibilities of organisation and delivery of these projects, they work with 1,400 lay people (teachers, support staff, service personnel). Between them they care for 15,545 pupils.

The communities of the Province are, in general, situated close to where they carry out their mission. We have communities of Brothers in Bilbao and Durango, in Ancín, Arre and Sarriguren, in Logrono and in Lardero, in Zaragoza, in Guadalajara, Talavera and Toledo, in Naval Moral de la Mata, in Alcalá, Fuenlabrada, San José del Parque, Chaberi, Los Molinos, El Escorial, School of Spirituality (Brothers and Lay People) and two others in Villalba. In Bucharest, Romania, we have two communities; one at the day-care centre and a Champagnat House. In addition, some of our Brothers share the mission by working in international communities (Algeria, Brazil, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Honduras, Lebanon and El Salvador.)

Our great Provincial target is the Marist life. Our structure is set up to encourage the development of the Marist vocation, as much in Brothers as in the Laity, a fact that has begun to bear fruit, since in reality, throughout the Province, we have Marist Brothers and other people who are committed to the Marist charism. Moreover, there are a great number of people who live their Christian lives in the Marist style through fraternities and local Marist groups, with links to our schools and projects.



In our work, we target a quality and innovative education, training, and care of people. They are places of evangelisation and dialogue, where the Marist Christian identity is placed at the centre of the school community.



Our Province has several commitments which result from our Christian belief and from being Marist. We emphasize two of them: the first is our commitment to the protection of minors. As an institution dedicated to the education of children and young people, we are convinced of the importance of establishing and promoting a school policy that safeguards the rights of minors. In accordance with out the principles and values that guide our education work and our mission as teachers, we proclaim our commitment to the defence of the rights of minors, we propose to strengthen the methods of prevention and protection that have already been put in place, and we will set in motion the mechanisms which are needed to ensure the safety of all children and young people involved in all our education projects.



The second commitment which we emphasize is to uphold the rights of the child. We are committed to the promotion and defence of the rights of boys, girls and young people, and we look to guarantee and protect their rights in our dealings with them, in our dialogue with them, in our fraternity with them, in our respect for them, and in valuing their diversity.



At present, among our priorities, is the promotion of and support for the Marist vocation as Brother and Lay Person: driving forward the specific pastoral vocation as Brother, drawing up and putting forward a plan for joint formation consolidating the links with lay people, and supporting the personal and communitarian needs of the Brothers. We also give priority to strengthening the Brothers-Lay People communion, and to looking for new communitarian realities (supporting the development of Marist Christian Communities and putting forward new styles of Marist Community Life). We want to empower our joint projects with the Marist charism, through support for personal training in Marist leadership, development and implementation of an innovative Provincial framework and encouragement to work in networks and manage resources. On the other hand, we prioritize service to “the Montagnes of today”, ensuring that our education establishments are places committed to social transformation and developing Gospel based methods of welcoming and caring for those who have moved away from their faith. In order to achieve this, we have to recognise in our surroundings who are the poor and the needy of today, and commit ourselves to them.

We like to think of a future in which the Marist vocation of the lay person and Brother is present in our work and is witnessed in our lives. We like to think of a future full of children and young people who take full advantage of their education and mature as Christians. We like to think, finally, of a bright future in which happy and committed teachers feel called to educate and announce the Kingdom of God to children and young people, especially the most poor.

# **“MARIST HOUSE” GLASGOW 1907 – 2017 Part 1**



## **St. Kentigern's Hostel, Partickhill: Marist House 1907-2017**

The Brothers in Glasgow will move from their current community in Marist House, Glasgow during the summer of 2017, when they will move to Independent Living Apartments in Nazareth House. In this article I want to share something about the history of a house which has played an important part in the story of the Brothers in Britain.

The two semi-detached villas which comprise Marist House were bought by Archbishop Eyre in 1874 as a seminary for the Diocese of Glasgow (known at that time as the Vicariate Apostolic of the Western District). A wooden structure was built with a kitchen beside the house and a passageway leading to a large chapel. Some local Catholics attended the seminary chapel for Sunday mass, which was a source of tension with the local parish until a solution regarding mass contributions was resolved! A new seminary was built in 1892 and the Partickhill building became the presbytery for St. Peter's parish until 1903 when the current Parish Church was opened. Between 1903 and 1910 the former seminary chapel was used as a billiard hall for men in the parish.

The Notre Dame Sisters were offered the former seminary building but declined to accept it, and later established a training college for young women not far from Partickhill. The Diocese approached the Marist Brothers and proposed that we would run a residential training centre for Catholic men and Marist Brothers who were in training. They would attend the local "Provincial" (Government) centre for the training of teachers, and receive religious instruction at Partickhill. The Provincial Committee designated the building as a "hostel," and it became known as St. Kentigern's Hostel. The hostel is situated within walking distance from Glasgow University. The official date of the opening of the community is given as October, 1907.

From 1908 until 1920, 136 Brothers and laymen lived and studied at Partickhill, with an understandable reduction in numbers between 1915 and 1918, as a result of enlistment in military service during WWI. In 1919 there were 18 laymen and 3 Brothers who lived as students in the house. A report indicated that the arrangements were wholly inadequate, and there had been



recurrent difficulties regarding financial arrangements and support for resident students. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, 1920, the Provincial Council expressed a fear that the hostel could become a burden on the Province. The Brothers continued to use the house as a residence for student Brothers. Some young Catholic laymen who were students at Glasgow University, also lived in the hostel.

In 1924 there was a change to the law in Scotland which required that all male teachers should be university graduates. After completing their university studies they were required to undertake a year of teacher training at Jordanhill Training College, which was situated about one mile west of St. Kentigern's Hostel.

Archbishop Mackintosh, who became Archbishop of Glasgow in 1922, visited the hostel on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1929, as he had not yet visited this part of his Diocese. At the end of his visit he indicated his intention to terminate the current agreement and to take back the house for another use. The Director requested that he inform the Brother Provincial of his intentions. There is no record of any ensuing negotiations! A further development regarding the religious instruction of Catholic male students probably contributed to the arrangement which was arrived at between the Diocese and the Province. Mr Burnett, the Principal of Jordanhill Training College, expressed a willingness to let Roman Catholic students receive religious instruction in their faith at the same time as the Presbyterian students received their religious instruction. A new contract was agreed with the Archdiocese of Glasgow on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1930, whereby the Director of the hostel would provide religious instruction for Catholic students and the Brothers would have the use of the hostel for Marist and lay students. This arrangement continued until the 1980s, when Brother Conrad retired from the role of lecturer at Jordanhill College. Edmund McCarthy, who lived in St. Kentigern's from 1978 – 82, was the only lay student who lived in the hostel after the early 1960s.

**Brendan Geary FMS**

## *From the History of the Institute - 4*

### *The Brothers during the Siege of Paris in 1870 and the Commune of 1871*

Introduction: The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the rule of the socialist Commune in Paris at the beginning of 1871 belong to the darkest period of French history. France had to endure a bitter defeat with the end of the reign of the empire of Napoleon III and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. This marked the beginning of the Republic, the siege of Paris by the Prussian army and the ensuing Reign of Terror of the Commune. The Brothers were living in a residence in Paris totally isolated from the rest of the Marist world. The Director, Brother Norbert who later became the co-founder of Arlon, did however write a series of letters to the Superior General Louis Marie who meantime had left the city by cable car. So Norbert did not know if the letters had reached their destination and received no reply from outside. These 40 letters are an extremely interesting and authentic witness to the life of the Brothers in this time of great danger and deprivation. What follows here is a short summary but a dramatic chapter in the history of the Brothers. The original

letters can be found in the book, "Le T.C. Frère Norbert," Paris 1901. Brother Norbert lived from 1835 to 1899. He entered the Novitiate in Beaucamps in 1849 and from 1876 to 1893 was an Assistant General. After his time in France he worked in Brazil, but died from a tropical illness on board ship on his way home from Brazil.

## **1. The period of the Siege**

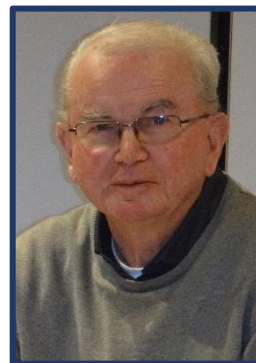
*"As I write these lines to you, I can hear the whistling of a bomb as it drops a few steps away. It is all right for us here; we will be able to sleep in the cellar tonight."* This remark in a letter of 9th January 1871 sums up succinctly the dramatic situation of the Brothers during the months of the siege. Over a period of months the bombs fell as well as grenades and other missiles resulting in many deaths. But the four Brothers lived through this with great fortitude and continued teach their 300 pupils as if it were all quite normal. Again and again Brother Norbert would say that they were not frightened but rather their trust was in God. Again and again, in almost every letter he assured us that things were going well and there was no call for complaint. In fact, on one occasion he wrote, "I can hardly write this, but I am ashamed to say how well we are doing at this wretched time." Yet, they did suffer from the worsening situation of the food supplies. So he described on 4<sup>th</sup> October that there was only horse meat to be had and later that in the food market only dogs, cats and rats were on offer. Their house in the end was partly turned into a military hospital where 30 wounded people were cared for. Naturally the teaching was curtailed. As he wrote on 29<sup>th</sup> October, "The teaching continues with some difficulty since our Parisian children have their heads full of slaughter and the noise of firearms."

A constant characteristic of the letters is an attempt to interpret the poor situation from a religious perspective. On one occasion he writes, "Here we are in the Catacombs and attempt to imitate the piety of the first Christians. He often repeated that it was a time of testing and punishment, "What a punishing time! How greatly it points to our culpability." He saw it as a particular act of providence that on 20<sup>th</sup> January, when a grenade struck and caused considerable damage, none of the inhabitants was injured. He also mentioned that it was a guarantee of the help of God that many of those who prayed were able to escape their own troops. Steeped in the Marist spirit, he wrote, "It is due to the influence of those who go daily to the Church of Our Lady of Victories to plead with her to save France." At last came the cessation of hostilities but the political situation in Paris soon led to a new siege and the domination by the Commune. This led to the civil war and the brutal penalties whereby thousands were executed.

## **2. The Reign of the Commune**

After a brief period of calm the political situation developed into a confrontation between the radicalisation of the Socialists and the new regime. Brother Norbert suspected this would lead to further disaster. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1871 he wrote, "There is something unusual in the air these days. More than ever, the seven deadly sins are raising their heads. The press are preaching Socialism from the top of their lungs." He felt, "Anarchy is on its way." But the Brothers continued their work in the school and were in no way molested. He assessed the situation correctly, "We are on the alert, but we are not afraid." But then they had to face fear when the Commune announced the confiscation by decree of all religious ownership and the Bishop as well as other

clergy were imprisoned. His short summation of events was, "Our position is critical." Then there followed another decree by which they all had to sign up with the National Guard. When at last the short reign of the Commune came to an end another quite different problem arose; the Superiors advised the urgent abandonment of the town. Norbert and the other Brothers were decidedly against this, "The situation is tolerable and I am convinced that it is better to remain here than leave." But the end of the Brothers in Paris came in a tragic and totally unexpected way. A priest who was an RE teacher, spoke to the pupils about the battle of Lepanto and likened the Communards to the Turks. Knowledge of this unwise statement soon became widespread and the decision to arrest the Brothers decided. After a warning they had to escape their house very quickly. Brother Norbert was able to return on 5<sup>th</sup> June.



**An Afterthought:** On reflection on the above situation who could not but be reminded of the present situation of the Blue Marists in Aleppo? They are holding out amidst the grenades in a large city and continue with their service to the community; in this they are faithful to divine providence in the spirit of Champagnat in the face of a gruesome destiny and embattled in an absurd situation which comes about as a result of the blindness and megalomania of the politicians.

**Augustin Hendlmeier FMS**

## A child has the Right to be a child...

At the southern perimeter of Rome, far away from the streams of tourists and pilgrims, lies the General House of the Marist Brothers on a pine covered elevation. From the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2016 Marists from all over the world came together there for the conference "Rights of Children – Keeping Children safe".

It is good that this conference took place and yet painful, because it pitilessly points to reality. That is: *A child has the right to be a child and to be treated as a child!* That should be self-evident at every place in the world. However it is not – and it never will be. But with the increasing public awareness for the plight of children, the suffering will be lessened. To advocate for these rights of children and point to them unyielding becomes an accusation of the many perpetrators who inflict indescribable harm on children.

I know this agony myself: At the age of nine I was sexually abused by a catholic priest. After endless years of inner dying I found myself again with the help of dedicated people. Today I can pass on my personal experience of healing to others.

I gladly accepted the invitation to talk about my journey at this conference.



The conference begins: a big, wide room, many round tables with carefully composed working material, small bowls filled with colourful sweets from Latin America. At the front end of the room stands the statue of Mother Mary, surrounded with flowers. At her feet lie colourful flags from the various countries from which the Marists have journeyed. A blanket in shining, vivid colours covers the speaker's table. It looks nice. The participants greet each other cordially. Many already know each other. It is a large family. It is only natural that I am also welcomed into this family with openness and warmth. I feel at home.

We start our intense conference schedule, loosened by various relaxing exercises with Brendan, getting to know each other. That's fun and feels good. Then we turn our attention to the programme.

On the second day I am sitting at the brightly shining table sharing my life's story, as a representative of many other people affected. I can hear the silence in the room and feel the openness, the dismay but also the warmth and the open he material, small bowls filled with colourful sweets from Latin America. At the front end of the room arts, which makes my sharing possible. Often I look into the faces which mirror back understanding and emotion. "We will not go home the same people", "Something has changed in my heart", are two of the many responses. The conference offers opportunities for many conversations, both serious and cheerful. I am delighted at the interest and frankness. My greatest wish has been fulfilled: to touch the participants' hearts.

With their very poignant and well informed contributions, the speakers convey the harsh reality of children and young people in the various countries and continents. The suffering and distress are enormous. This becomes clear in all contributions. In my own words I would like to express it in this way:

*"Look into the eyes of the children who cannot speak,  
who want to live – but do not know how;  
these children need us...."*

It is where the Marists work that they look into the eyes of these children, give them a home wherever it is possible. Tirelessly and often under the most difficult circumstances they stand up for the lives and rights of children. I come to the realization that this creates an inner light that emanates outwards. It resides inside these people who are committed to their neighbour with humility and with their whole heart, and who are deeply connected with Mother Mary and God. Often during these days I have the feeling that Mother Mary is holding her protective hand over us. The daily communal prayers connect us with the source of divine power that is present in every human being and strengthen our conviction to continue our path together.

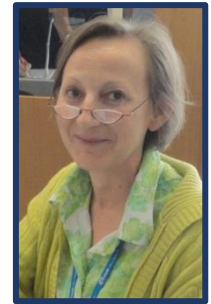
After the speakers' contributions we work with concentration at the round tables and in small groups, collecting questions, developing ideas and possible solutions to be brought into the plenary sessions. There are perspectives for a better future which will bring more worth living conditions for children and young people. The conference is being held with warmth and cordiality. I am grateful for being able to participate and to have this experience.

The picture of the "Return of the Prodigal Son", by Rembrandt, which Brother Emili hands out to all of us on the last day, with a very fine explanation, stands on my desk now, and the small sculpture of Marcellin sits in front of me on the window sill. A few days before I began writing this article, I dreamt

of the big statue of Marcellin at the Vatican: “The statue of Marcellin is surrounded by a clear beaming light that seems to originate in him. Suddenly the statue comes alive. The two children in the niche scramble around Marcellin cheerfully. He opens his arms with a smile and stretches his hands out towards us.”

I am happy about this dream and the spiritual depths which have carried this conference so clearly and which will continue to be felt well into the future. Let us continue to walk this path together...

**Agnes Wich**



# Brother Elie-Lucien BLOMME

29<sup>th</sup> April 1923 – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017



Lucien Blomme was born of farming parents on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1923 in Moere, in western Flanders, beside the polders of the North Sea. He was the fifth child in the family, and had a sister called Marie. He liked to recall that Moere was the birth village of the present Bishop of Anvers, Mgr Johan Bonny.

Brother Elie professed his first vows at the end of his noviciate on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1941. He experienced the difficult years of the 1940 – 1945 war, and his health was rather fragile. After his years of formation had ended, he spent 12 years as gardener at Arlon, Habay-la-Vieille, Mont-st-Guibert and especially in Pittem. In 2016 he celebrated 75 years of consecrated Marist life.

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 1953, at the request of his superiors, he set off as a missionary to the Belgian Congo. There, he again became very involved and very active as a gardener, responsible for the farms in different places, most notably in Nyangezi, near Bukavu, where he was in charge of providing food for 100 – 800 boarders as well as for the community of Brothers. He carried out this task with enthusiasm and great devotion. Everyone in the school knew that they could rely on Brother Elie.

He finally left Africa in 1997 to join the community of Kessel-Lo, our retirement house in Louvain. He put himself to good use there for 20 years, be it carrying out tasks in the garden, or helping out around the house. Brother Elie was very much appreciated by the other Brothers who all enjoyed sitting at table, listening to stories of his “African adventures”, and much, much more ....!

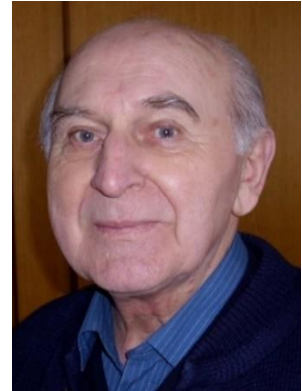


As his health continued to deteriorate, his superiors transferred him on 1<sup>st</sup> February to the retirement home at Genval, to receive better medical care. He only spent two nights there before being hospitalised in Saint-Pierre d'Ottignies Clinic. He left us in the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> February to join his Heavenly Father and Saviour, whom he had served so faithfully.

**Edouard Blondeel FMS**

# Brother Gottfried PRECHTL

4<sup>th</sup> August 1929 – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017



Karl Prechtel was born on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1929 in Miltach, near Cham. His parents, Josef and Mary, maiden name Graf, ran a farm. He had four siblings, his sister Maria and three brothers, two of whom died in the war.

At the age of sixteen he entered the Juniorate at Furth; on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1947 he became a Novice, receiving the religious name of Gottfried Maria, while a year later he made his first vows and finally in 1953 his perpetual profession.

After his Leaving Certificate (*Abitur*) in 1953 he spent two years teaching, partly on the staff at Mindelheim and as a teacher at Marian College, Vaduz, Liechtenstein. This was followed by studies at Fribourg in Switzerland in German, English and Catechetics, gaining his secondary teaching certificate after which he became a teacher in Furth and Vaduz. In 1964 he became Director of Boarding, followed from 1967 to 1977 as Headteacher of the Marist Gymnasium at Furth and finally from 1983 to 1989 he was Superior of the community at Furth while teaching in the Formation house.

To the surprise of the Brothers, at 60 years of age, he left for the Mission in Kenya. In spite of some health problems he still undertook this step, but in fact the tropical climate was good for him. This new challenge as a Christian messenger among the poor on Lake Victoria was difficult but also inspiring. Brother Gottfried helped to build the new Marist Mission Sector. With great dedication and constant availability he undertook the responsibility of Superior. During his time several Mission Stations were built as well as a large church in Roo for which he was architect, foreman, artist and the one responsible for bringing in the money. For many local people, Brother Gottfried was a blessing. Above all, the young people treasured him due to his innate kindness and humanity.

The Mission Station in Kenya was close to his heart where he wished to remain as long as possible. In 1999 he wrote to the Brother Provincial that he would like to return to Germany due

to his advancing age and failing health. He finally left Kenya for the last time in March 2003. The Brothers bade him farewell with moving words thanks and honoured him as a father.

Brother Gottfried spent a short time in Recklinghausen and Cham and finally came to Furth in September 2004. But even here he continued to make himself useful, helping out where he could. He lived his life in the certainty of his faith and was a true disciple of Champagnat. In August 2016 he came to St Martin's Care Home at Pfeffenhausen where he died in the early morning of 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

**Winfried Schreieck FMS**

